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THE

# Manchester

# Quarterly

AN ILLUSTRATED JOURNAL

OF

LITERATURE AND ART.



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# Manchester Quarterly Advertiser.

JULY, 1907.

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FOUNDED 1862.

The objects of the MANCHESTER LITERARY CLUB are :—

1. To encourage the pursuit of Literature and Art; to promote research in the several departments of intellectual work; and to further the interests of Authors and Artists in Lancashire.
2. To publish from time to time works illustrating or elucidating the literature, art, and history of the county.
3. To provide a place of meeting where persons interested in the furtherance of these objects can associate together.

The methods by which these objects are sought to be obtained are :—

1. The holding of weekly meetings, from October to April, for social intercourse, and for the hearing and discussion of papers.
2. The publication of such papers, at length or abridged, in a Magazine, entitled the *Manchester Quarterly*, as well as in an annual volume of Transactions; and of other work undertaken at the instance of the Club, including a projected series of volumes dealing with local literature.
3. The formation of a library consisting of (a) works by members, (b) books by local writers or relating to the locality, and (c) general works of reference.
4. The exhibition, as occasion offers, of pictures by artist members of the Club.

Membership of the Club is limited to authors, journalists, men of letters, painters, sculptors, architects, engravers, musical composers, members of the learned professions, and of English and foreign universities, librarians, and generally persons engaged or specially interested in literary or artistic pursuits.

The meetings are held at the Grand Hotel, Aytoun Street, every Monday evening during the Session. Each Session opens and closes with a Conversazione. There are also occasional Musical and Dramatic Evenings, and a Christmas Supper. During the vacation excursions are held, of which due notice is given.

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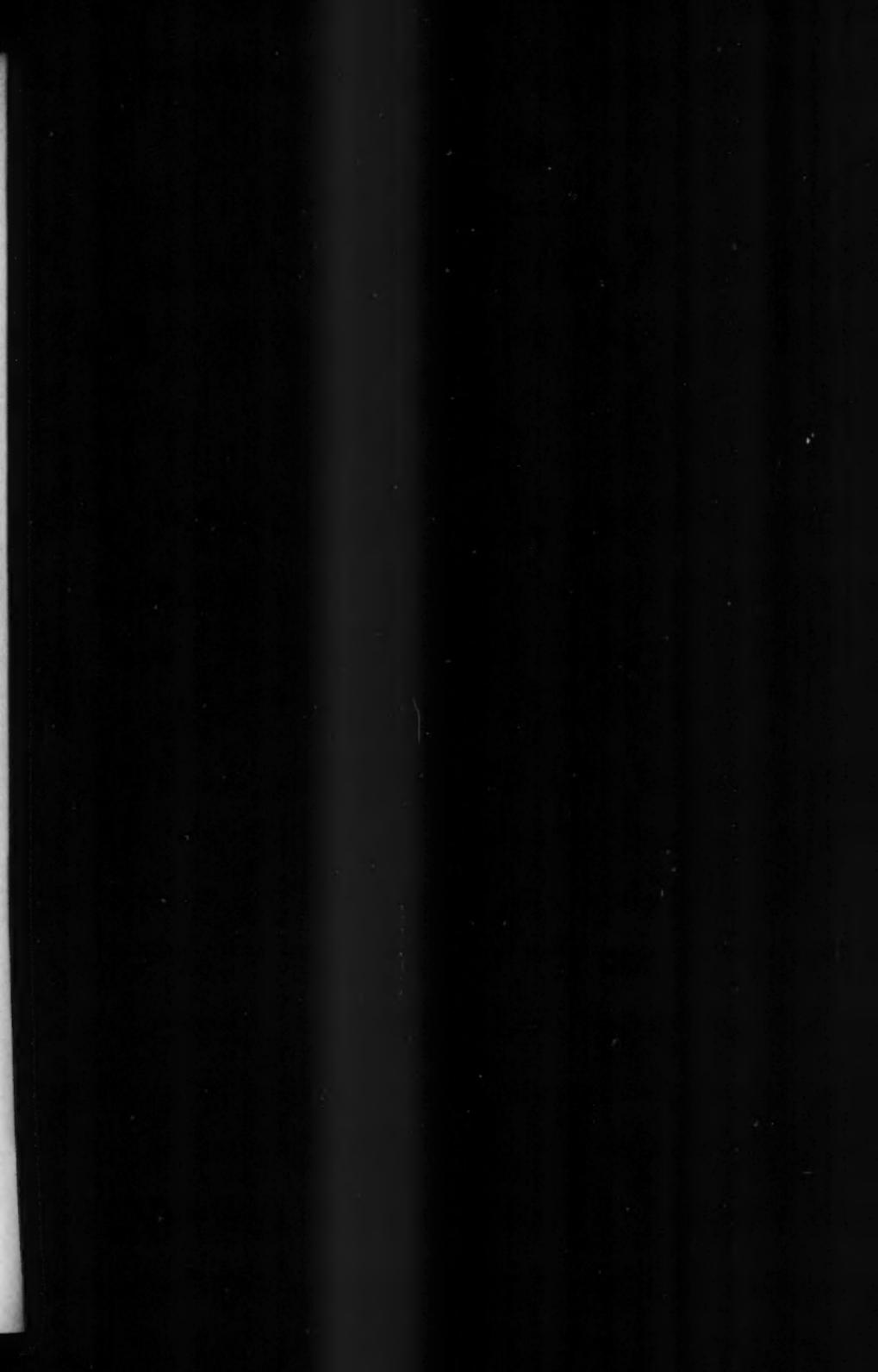


The Papyrus of Anhai - 1100 B.C.



A. The god Thoth, the scribe of the gods.  
B. The god Horus examining the Panacea  
of the Balance.









## THE ART OF THE SCRIBE AND THE ILLUMINATOR.

By HENRY CADNESS.

THE art of the scribe and the illuminator is intimately associated with literature and formerly was inseparable from it. It is true that the scribe is but a means to an end, his skill being employed in embodying and presenting the thoughts and ideas of man to convey them in visible form and symbol to his fellow-man. It is true also that he does not originate thought, at least it is not part of his work, but by his tasteful treatment and technical knowledge he has added much charm and delight to the precious mind work of the inspired ones. By his exquisite embellishments in colour and gold, and his interpretations of Nature's beauty, he has imparted an extra charm which has rendered the author's work still more precious in every sense, reminding one of the epilogue in Longfellow's "Golden Legend":—

Upon the pages  
Of the sealed volume that I bear  
The deed divine  
Is written in characters of gold,  
That never shall grow old,  
But through all ages  
Burn and shine,  
With soft effulgence!

In this respect art has been the preserver of much of the richest literature apart from its literary merit, and the work of the illuminator seems to have given a charmed existence to the pages it has adorned, but, for all this, very much has perished through the ravages of time, war and other causes.

It would be deeply interesting to trace the subject through its various stages—historically or otherwise; but it must suffice for my purpose to mention only, that, from the bone sculpture of primitive man to the printed page in modern times, there have been many ingenious means of conveying ideas, and communicating of mind with mind, each belonging to certain distinct periods, and as one means was adopted a previous one fell into disuse. The more important of these were thin sheets of metal, tablets of clay or of wax, incised with a hard tool, fine cloth, the laminated pith of plants, the bark of a tree, and prepared skins of calf or sheep inscribed upon with brush or pen and pigment, and, lastly, paper pulp printed upon with movable types.

Fig. 1 is an example from an Egyptian "Book of the Dead" which shows an early use of brush and pigment expressing the life and customs of four thousand years ago by means of forms and symbols derived from Nature, treated in the most dignified decorative manner, and no doubt there were thousands of years' development and experience before such a rich result was attained.

Writers on paleography are agreed on the fact that most of the primitive motives of expression were simple representation of natural forms, and some of these are traceable in Chinese and Japanese writing of to-day. The diagrams (Fig. 2) illustrate something of this, and it can be shown that some of the letters of our alphabet are but abstracts from Egyptian and other sources, the







Fig 4



Fig 5

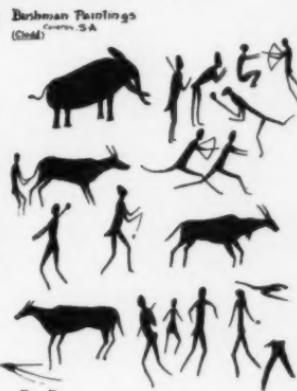


Fig 3



letter M, being a notable example. The history of the invention of letters has been the subject of much research, which has been very fully published, and it all tends to show that something of the same instinct prevailed everywhere. The African Bushman's record of the chase (Fig. 3) is similar to the treatments that are in use by the Aborigines in America; whilst the Egyptian fishpond (Fig. 4) shows a decorative description quite characteristic of ancient Egypt, and in all these there is no attempt to do more than give a plain statement of fact. The drawing (Fig. 5) is the work of a child aged 5½, who drew it at my request, it is one of many in my possession which show the same instinct in the modern child. It will be noticed that the symmetrical arrangement is not quite so formal as in the Egyptian example.

In considering the conventional forms of letters it should ever be borne in mind that the instinct for depicting Nature forms precedes the use of abstract ones, thus providing forcible evidence to show that children should be taught drawing, if not before writing, at least equally with it, though I think even before it, in order to develop inherent taste that otherwise becomes deadened.

From these somewhat complex forms to the simple letter types now commonly used there is a wonderful exercise of invention compelled by necessities of progress.

Matthew Arnold in "Revolutions" suggests something of this:—

Before Man parted for this earthy strand,  
While yet upon the verge of heaven he stood,  
God put a heap of letters in his hand,  
And bade him make with them what word he could.

And Man has turn'd them many times: made Greece,  
Rome, England, France—yes, nor in vain essay'd  
Way after way, changes that never cease.  
The letters have combin'd: something was made.

Examples of a variety of types and their treatments are given in a pamphlet published by the Missionary Society, in which about one hundred different types of lettering are used, each bearing the characters used by the scribes in the countries to which their printed Bibles are sent.

Necessity gives rise to the simplifying of the complex ideograms, and, as in all other crafts, the means employed have their limitations. Incising on metal with a stylus gives lines of equal thickness; and on wax the lines are of varied depths, whilst the cuts with a hard tool into dried or soft clay give readily arrow-headed characters, such as are used in the old Assyrian; the chisel cuts in marble were probably renderings of angular reed pen work and in the type known as Roman determined the simple forms which now serve as the basis of our modern printing types (Fig. 6); all these processes give something of a mechanical appearance to the type, but in the Roman much of what may be called *individual life* is expressed in the best examples. This is shown in the graceful treatments by the early Italian and German printers in the sixteenth century, Albert Dürer contributing the geometrical setting in which slight variations are made to counteract optical effects; every letter becoming architecturally fit to combine harmoniously with its fellows.

The modern development of printing includes a revival of these beautiful proportions. The running of letters together is sometimes resorted to in order to save room and this is further enabled by diminishing the size of the vowels. The rounded character of letters peculiar to pen treatment is seen in the work of European scribes in the early centuries, the quill and the reed giving graceful curves, as in uncials and in our modern running hand.

The Celtic type (Fig. 8) shews this, the Book of Kells and other books written in England and Ireland about the







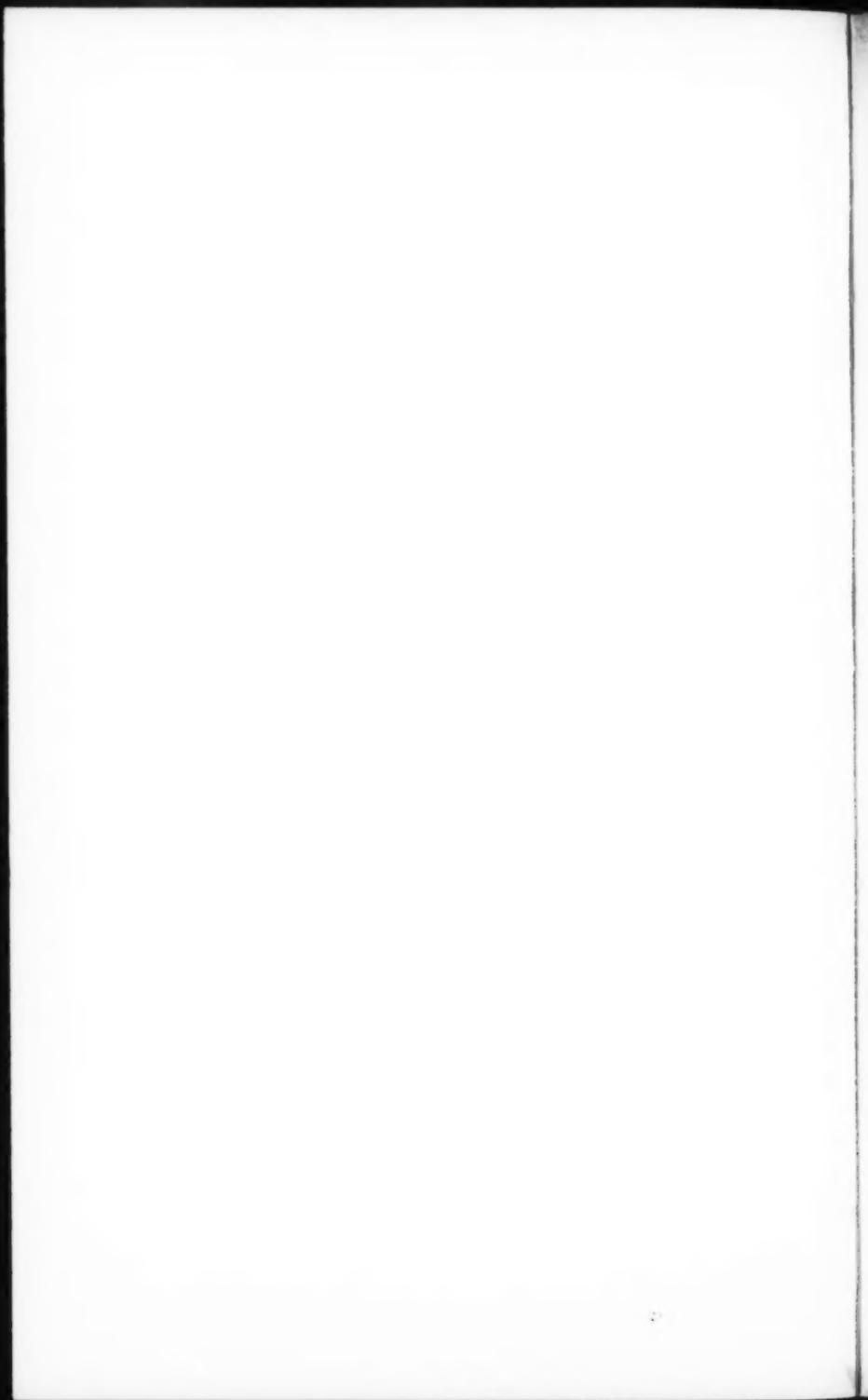
ABCDEF	A <sup>b</sup> COE
GHIJKL	f <sup>g</sup> hlli
MNOPOQ	m <sup>n</sup> op
RSTUVXY	r <sup>s</sup> t <sup>u</sup>
ROMAN <small>1900 AD</small>	na cimn-litreaca

Fig. 6

Fig. 6

Fig. 8

The Alphabet



7th Century are good examples. The small letters or minuscules partake of the same character. The transition from these to the Gothic angular black letter and from this to our modern script running hand can be traced gradually, in all cases showing characteristics natural in using the pen as a free means of expression. Such forms have become crystallized in printing, it would seem for all time or until our wonderful hurry sets all aside for type clicking and shorthand.

On the subject of style I would further say that character is partly expressed by little variations in the type, but when one is in a hurry to get a thought down one resorts to abbreviations which are sometimes difficult to interpret. It is said that much mediæval writing was so full of this kind of character that none but the initiated could interpret it, thereby compelling the employment of a reader.

The varied arrangements or plans of the page are numerous and appear to bear some relation to the style of architecture in vogue at the same time—from a plain architectural framing to the most fantastic scrollery, almost every possible planning has been employed. These might be classified under three general headings—(1) the rigid and severe architectural treatment in which frames of lines or of architectural details are employed; (2) the restrained use of free details, foliage, flowers, birds; (3) the free and the fantastic, often treated so naturally as to lose all decorative value.

The increase in the width of the margin in later books is said to be for the greater display of decoration and in most cases, although small in scale, a good illumination has a dignity and quality of bigness that is very effective. A remarkable restraint of individuality seems to persist for long periods in certain countries. The artists conforming to conventionalities similar to those prevailing in

the sister arts, such a conservatism admitted of very slow changes, and these arose chiefly from foreign intercourse, or changes in custom and habits, so that a summary of styles in Europe could be formed under a few headings and some of the most interesting treatments are seen in the transition stages. This slowness of change is so different from the activity of modern times—when every individual artist sways his personality, picking and choosing from the work of the past, so bountifully placed at his feet by means of scientific processes of reproduction and by rapid intercourse. By combining this research with fresh inspiration from Nature, the artist endeavours to suit the modern taste and desire. Unfortunately the gain in this respect is minimised by the extremely varied desires of the people, for so rapid are the changes in fashion and in its demands that, before a style has had time to mature, it is uprooted to make room for other fancies. Perhaps it is well in some respects, for much that is uprooted ought never to have been planted, that which is true is likely to live on in an otherwise healthy community, but it is not only so in this art but in almost everything associated with modern life wherein

Every humour hath its adjunct pleasure  
Wherein it finds a joy above the rest.

The motives employed in the decoration of the page in olden times were similar to those used in other crafts at the same time. In the Byzantine there is a treatment of lobed leaves with grotesque animals like those occurring in textiles of the period and derived in the first instance from Roman art. The nude figure was not used except in representing the crucifixion, and the draped figures were treated very formally and much flattened. In the Celtic style animal forms, extremely grotesque, were the

chief motives, their limbs extended and interlaced into the most complex patterns just as wires were threaded to form borders and diapers in the jewellery of that time. These, as already mentioned, became mingled with the Byzantine straps, bands, knots, like the patterns on the runic crosses. Later the lighter architectural forms were relieved with the foliage of ivy and vine, not in natural growth but quite subservient to the decorative principle, an evenly balanced distribution being the chief consideration; and playful fancies were introduced of figures in tournament or in domestic life, and birds and quadrupeds most daintily treated in line and tint. To this period belongs the most beautiful miniatures chiefly painted in the capital letters and illustrating the subject of the text. David harping was a favourite for a psalter. Similar treatments are seen in the tapestries and embroideries for which England was so celebrated in the thirteenth century. The Bedford Missal of the fourteenth century illustrates this at the period before the realistic flower and fruit painting came in to meet extravagant demands.

In Charles Reade's novel, "The Cloister and the Hearth," the hero is one who has been taught penmanship and reading by the monks of Terbourg. He came into contact with Margaret Van Eyck, sister of the famous painter and he received encouragement from this lady, who also was an artist.

She gave him brush gold, vermillion and ultramarine, and a good piece of vellum to lay them on. An affection sprang up between this old family and the young calligrapher that was doubly characteristic of the time; for this was a century in which the fine arts and the higher mechanical arts were not separated by any distinct boundary, nor were those who practised them. It was an age in which artists sought out and loved one another.

The novel has frequent references to the craftsman and gives a true picture of the conditions under which he worked. These were similar in the middle of the fifteenth century to those of the ninth when craftsmen prepared much of their own materials or at least they understood their preparation, and such facilities as we now have were unknown. Economies were exercised, for the trouble and experience required in the preparation of pigments and vellum was very great. Something of this is echoed in the passage :

Gerard drew from his wallet with some trepidation a vellum deed, the back of which he had cleaned and written upon by way of a specimen. Soon Gerard was installed in feu Werter's cell with wax lights and a little frame that could be set at any angle, and all the materials of calligraphy. The sub-prior forced a rix-dollar on Gerard and several brushes and colours out of the Convent stock, which was very large.

In Rome Gerard enters service and copies from the glorious grimy old MS. of Plutarch's "Lives."

The papal inkstands were all glorious externally, but within the ink was vile. But Gerard carried ever good ink, home made, in a dirty little inkhorn. He prayed on his knees for a firm and skilful hand, and set to work.

"The Imitation of Christ" attributed to Thomas à Kempis could only have been produced under similar conditions to these. The famous treatise on handicrafts by the learned monk, Theophilus, written about the twelfth century, gives complete insight into the methods pursued at that time and recipes are given which are not much improved upon even to-day, excepting from the economical standpoint, for the mixing of pigments, preparation of surfaces, of pens and brushes, in fact there are complete working instructions not only for illuminating but for many crafts, such as decorating, glass staining and enamel-

ling, and it may be said that no branch of these arts has been lost. For example the mixture used to raise the gold in use to-day is almost equal to that of old. The gold and the pigments are more beautiful and certainly much purer. One frequently hears these remarks about *lost art*, particularly in stained glass, whilst such may have been the case twenty years ago, modern science has recovered and surpassed or added much that was unknown formerly. The loss is in the lack of that spirit of application which, in old times was the outcome of a religious fervour and enthusiasm in the fullest sense of the word, such as prevailed in Theophilus' time. He writes thus in his introduction to the worker:—

Through the spirit of intelligence you have acquired a faculty of ingenuity to apply to your varied work. By working and teaching openly, with humility, you faithfully expound to those desirous to learn. Through the spirit of perseverance you shake off sloth and bestow with the confidence of a well-stored mind for the common good. Through piety you regulate the nature and destination of the work and the price of the fee that avarice may not creep in. By believing, confiding and giving thanks you ascribe to compassion whatever you have learned, or what you are, or what you are able to be.

No doubt it was in this spirit that the Anglo-Saxon and Celtic workers did their beautiful work when they travelled abroad, taking with them their remarkable style throughout Europe; Alcuin of York going even to the court of Charles the Great, and mingling with the Byzantine styles the peculiar interlacing patterns of the West. Of this period the Irishman is particularly proud, and the famous books of St. Columbanus and Lindisfarne are pointed to as wonderful achievements illustrating a type of pattern distinctly traditional.

It should be borne in mind that this craft was in the hands

of the few, that only few could either read or write, and those who could were influenced by the highest literature and learning so that the *spirit of intelligence* was ever present; and later when this craft was followed by the laity the guilds of craftsmen tended to cultivate the higher feeling by thorough association and apprenticeship. Above all the quieter and more leisurely life enabled greater concentration, and whether Psalter or Breviary, Botany or Bestiary, or the classics were being dealt with, we find generally a remarkable harmony in the character of the embellishment with the text in the best work. It is only when luxury and extravagance and love of possession became dominant that commissions were given for extremely rich work in which the ornament was very lavish and often wanting in refinement; the craftsman meeting the demand with all the technical skill he possessed. And thus it has been in all ages: the artist and his work is the outcome of his opportunities and these are provided by the community.

The extreme was reached just at the time that printing was invented. The Grimani MS. with its naturalistic treatments illustrates this. Whilst the Bedford Book is most sumptuous it does not go to the same excess. Fortunately the technical requirements of early printing compelled return to simpler treatments and simple line decorations were first used, excepting when the illustrations were added by the miniaturist after the printing was completed.

The printing press struck off the funeral note of the calligrapher, though he died slowly and made many spasmodic efforts at revival. Reade causes Gerard to say:

"I am sped; mine enemy is at the door. The press is in Rome." And when offered a copy of "Lactantius," printed by Fust at Subiaco, the trader says: "Will ye buy, Messer? See how fair and even be the letters. Few can write like

that, and scarce a quarter of the price." He replied: "I fain would have it, but my heart will not let me. Know that I am a caligrapher, and these disciples run me round the world a-taking the bread out of my mouth. But I wish them no ill." And soliloquising afterwards, says: "One month more and an avalanche of printers' type shall roll down on Rome from those Apennines and lay us waste that writers be."

Printing in the first place reproduced the characters used by the illuminator and the perfection reached in so short a time was marvellous. The illuminator employed his art in adding miniatures and scrolls and later even these were applied by the press and the book illustrator and wood engraver took his place and ultimately the lithographer gave a return to colour decoration.

With the development of chromo-lithography the art of the illuminator received great attention. Reproductions of coloured examples were diffused throughout Europe, and between 1850 and 1860 a revival set in. Treatises on illumination, fully illustrated, encouraged the adoption of mediaeval styles often of the worst period, so that Gothic scrolls, canopies, framings became quite the fashion, and to venture on introducing anything not in the character of old work was looked upon with disfavour. The revival of the arts and crafts which began slowly after the 1851 Exhibition, and which has developed into a great renaissance, first took to imitating the details of old work, often mixing them strangely, and a notion prevailed that ornamental treatments included the distortion and even the ignoring of the use and construction of objects. This is seen fully also in the ugly pottery and uncomfortable furniture of the early part of last century, and in stained glass in which even the antiquated effects of time are imitated, and particularly in lettering and illuminating, which repeated the distorted, fantastic types such as

had been invented by the later German artists to serve as letters.

The diverse treatment, already referred to, which is presented in modern work is indicative of the spirit of individuality so characteristic of the modern arts and crafts movement, in which the worker, instead of being fettered by the past, is led by its teaching to make the most of his material without going to excess, remembering as Keats puts it, that "beauty is truth, truth beauty," and that the richest lessons are derived from Nature, for she never sacrifices *use* to beauty, but always makes it adjunct. This free exercise of individuality has resulted in some strange eccentricities, and has brought a certain amount of ridicule on the work, but the movement has had a wonderful effect on the handicrafts, and since that great genius, Wm. Morris, who, with Ruskin, may be said to have given a great impetus to it, there has been a mighty renaissance and in all crafts great changes have taken place. Naturally that of the illuminator has participated in this, and there is at present an effort being made, not to return to the old styles, but to work in the spirit of the old craftsmen so far as their heart was in the work, but not in that spirit of subjugation which prevailed in mediæval times and which led to severe conventionalities of treatment totally unsuited for to-day.

Ruskin has said: "Perfect illumination is only writing made lovely. The moment it passes into picture-making it has lost its dignity and function—to make writing itself beautiful—to make the sweep of the pen lovely,—is the true art of illumination."

The following extract from Longfellow's "Golden Legend," in which there is a beautiful description of a scene in a scriptorium with the Friar Pacificus transcribing and illuminating, brings vividly before the eye a pleasing

picture which may serve appropriately by way of conclusion. He is made to say:—

And now, as I turn the volume over  
And see what lies between cover and cover,  
What treasures of art these pages hold,  
All ablaze with crimson and gold,  
God forgive me! I seem to feel  
A sense of satisfaction steal  
Into my heart, and into my brain,  
As if my talent had not lain  
Wrapped in a napkin, and all in vain.  
Yes, I might almost say to the Lord,  
Here is a copy of Thy Word,  
Written out with much toil and pain;  
Take it, O Lord, and let it be  
As something I have done for Thee!





## HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW.

A CENTENARY NOTE.

By JOHN MORTIMER.

ONE hundred years have come and gone since Henry Wadsworth Longfellow was born into the world, and in recognition of this event in literary chronology, it has been suggested that a word or two regarding the poet might be said in the Manchester Literary Club. In performing this duty it is a curious matter for reflection that, as far as the Club's records go, this is the first occasion on which he has been brought forward in any prominent sense. Many other poets have been passed in review, but, upon this one, perhaps the most popular poet of his degree in our language, we have been strangely silent. It would be wrong, however, to suppose that such a silence can be construed into indifference. No one among us, whose literary tastes have taken the poetical direction, can possibly be other than intimate with him, and affectionately so if the present writer may presume the existence in others of a feeling that obtains within himself. In considering my own mental attitude towards Longfellow I am reminded sympathetically of the regard which Charles Lamb had for Cowper. You will remember that he said to Coleridge, "I am glad you love Cowper. I could forgive a man for not enjoying Milton, but I would not call that man my friend who should be offended

with 'the divine chit-chat' of Cowper." In like manner it always pains me when I hear Longfellow spoken of, as a poet, disparagingly. I have an impression, but which I hope is a mistaken one, that the author of "The Angel in the House" has, somewhere in his criticism, be-littled the author of "Evangeline," and the effect of it has been as though someone had spoken disrespectfully of a beloved inmate of one's own household. Among poets Longfellow was my earliest love, and an abiding sense of that young affection renders him sacred against all invidious comparisons. He it was who with the magic and charm of his verse first touched my finer sensibilities and awakened me to a consciousness of existence in a world of spiritual and material beauty. And no gentler and safer guide could a young disciple have who found himself on the threshold of that new and strange world. Instinctively I came to trust him; he filled my mind with pure images, and inspired me with lofty idealisms conveyed in language so abidingly mellifluous that it has accompanied me through all the subsequent years like a sweet and restful undersong. Without being superficial,—for there was a directness and true inwardness in it which went straight to the heart,—his poetry was all so simple, so lucid that no mental effort was required; in his verse the poet's "thoughts lay clear as pebbles in a brook." With many other poets, old and new, I have since become familiar, but none of them has influenced me in quite the same way. To his "House Beautiful" one turns as to a poetical birthplace. Of these abodes of our youth it may be said, in his own words,

We may build more splendid habitations,  
Fill the rooms with paintings and with sculpture,  
But we cannot  
Buy with gold the old associations!

Therefore does it follow that to read Longfellow again as I have been doing—though there was little need for it, so clear and so lasting has been the impression—is to revive those old associations:—

The dreams of youth come back again;  
 Low lisps of the summer rain,  
 Dropping on the ripened grain;  
 As once upon the flower.

If your mood and experience are in accordance with my own, as you turn over the pages of the old familiar volume you will seek first that memorable "Psalm of Life," and recall the effect it had on your youthful mind; how seriously and uncritically that poem was taken, how you caught the fine enthusiasm of it, the sense of the reality of existence, the call to action, "heart within and God o'erhead," with issues that might possibly become sublime, and how when the Psalmist concluded his exhortation with the words—

Let us then be up and doing,  
 With a heart for any fate,  
 Still achieving, still pursuing,  
 Learn to labour and to wait.

you devoutly responded to the appeal with a pious "Amen." Those were the "upward and onward" days, full of strenuousness and the desire for lofty achievements, and these noble impulses one saw personified in a mystical way in that young climber of the Alps, who, defying the elements,

Bore 'mid snow and ice,  
 A banner with the strange device,  
 Excelsior!

Perhaps it was not very clear what the young man's

purpose was, in that night of adventure, but it was all very picturesque and romantic, and the poem at least furnished us with a never-to-be-forgotten watchword. More definite was the poet when, in subsequent verses, dealing with "The Ladder of St. Augustine," and indicating for us "a path to higher destinies," he told us how—

The heights by great men reached and kept  
Were not attained by sudden flight,  
But they, while their companions slept,  
Were toiling upward in the night.

In discoursing on life and its possibilities the poet did not disguise the sorrows and disappointments that might await you, inculcating always a spirit of high courage in meeting them. To this end, in "The Light of Stars," he took you out into the night, and among the stars that bestrewed the firmament directed your attention to "the red planet Mars," as the one to whom you should give "the first watch of the night," in the time of adversity:

The star of the unconquered will,  
Serene and resolute and still,  
And calm and self-possessed.

An added grace was thus given to our astronomical knowledge, for how often, at the sight of the red planet Mars, has the poet's accustomed moral-ending come back?

And thou too, whosoe'er thou art,  
That readeest this brief psalm,  
As one by one thy hopes depart,  
Be resolute and calm.

O fear not in a world like this,  
And thou shalt know ere long,  
Know how sublime a thing it is  
To suffer and be strong.

Then there was that "Goblet of Life," of whose sweet and bitter waters we had all to drink, with the fennel in it, the mysterious herb which could clear the vision and impart a fearless strength. How forcibly in their first inception did those concluding lines come, in which the poet says to all poor folk who are enduring trial and distress :—

I pledge you in this cup of grief  
Where floats the fennel's bitter leaf !  
The Battle of our Life is brief,  
The alarm—the struggle—the relief—  
Then sleep we side by side.

Doubtless it was under the influence of that poem, and as an echo from it that one chose for one's first essay the subject and title of "The Battle of Life." As an anodyne for the trials of life he took us out to nature, discoursing lovingly of the flowers and many other of her aspects, and among the lessons therefrom came this :—

If thou art worn and hard beset  
With sorrows, that thou wouldest forget,  
If thou wouldest read a lesson, that will keep  
Thy heart from fainting and thy soul from sleep,  
Go to the woods and hills ! No tears  
Dim the sweet look that Nature wears

It is Longfellow's sympathy with suffering, often expressed in words charged with the deepest pathos and sincerity, that has endeared him so much to ordinary people whose taste for poetry may take no wider range. How many sorrowing hearts, in their time of bereavement, have found consolation and hope in that poem "The Reaper and the Flowers," and still more so in that other one, "Resignation," with its opening lines :

There is no flock however watched and tended  
But one dead lamb is there !  
There is no fireside howsoe'er defended,  
But has one vacant chair !

I do not envy the man who, at any time in his life, could read those verses unmoved. The carping critic in such a case would be of the same kindred as Wordsworth's philosopher:

One that would peep and botanize  
Upon his mother's grave.

By virtue of this recognised sympathy with the joys and sorrows of average humanity Longfellow became the poet of the household, a fireside poet as it were. There was nothing that he wrote which could not be read there without offence; young and old in the family circle gave him welcome acceptance, and he blended his poetry with their daily lives. Children especially he loved, and to them he has consecrated some of his most beautiful verses, such as this:—

Ye are better than all the ballads  
That ever were sung or said;  
For ye are living poems,  
And all the rest are dead.

Often in the firelight one recalls his "Footsteps of Angels," with its tender reminiscences of the departed, and as one listens to the ticking of the clock one remembers "The Old Clock on the Stairs," with that solemn reference to "the Here and the Hereafter" in its recurrent

Forever—Never!  
Never—Forever!

Of himself he might have been writing when, in that poem "The Day is Done," he tells what soul-soothing influences may come from reading the poet of your choice, if he be one

Whose songs gushed from his heart,  
As showers from the clouds of summer,  
Or tears from the eyelids start.

and how, in so doing,

The night shall be filled with music,  
And the cares that infest the day  
Shall fold their tents like the Arabs,  
And as silently steal away.

Many of his lyrics have become household songs, lending themselves as they do in their smooth versification to musical accompaniment. Of these are "The Bridge" and "The Village Blacksmith," which one would like to think of as imperishable, so full are they of wholesome sentiment and an enduring quality of poetical beauty.

In that old copy of Longfellow's poems about which my early associations cling, there is in the title-page a vignette showing a family group gathered about the fireside listening to the story of Evangeline. When first I came upon it, apart from the exquisite delineation of that hapless maiden, the beautiful embodiment of "the affection that hopes and endures and is patient," the poem had a charm of its own derived from the forest primeval and the scenery of that new world which formed the background of the story, and which in company with other stories with a similar environment, had just then a strange and peculiar fascination. As a teller of stories in verse Longfellow undoubtedly excelled, as Washington Irving did in prose. In some of his larger efforts he adopted the dramatic form, but you never think of them as possible stage presentations; they were always, in the essence of them narratives. In "Evangeline" he chose for his medium "the long roll of the hexameter," lines long drawn out and ending with a dying fall. Opinions differ as to the wisdom of the choice, but one did not trouble about metrical mechanisms then, the rhythmical cadences blended themselves in happy unison with the pathos of the narrative, and sufficed at any

rate as no other form could have better done to express the central thought of the whole :—

Patience accomplish thy work, accomplish thy work of  
affection,  
Sorrow and silence are strong, and patient endurance is  
godlike.

To pass from the stately measure of "Evangeline" to that of "The Song of Hiawatha,"

With its frequent repetitions  
And its wild reverberations,  
As of thunder in the mountains,

was to experience a sharp poetical contrast. Longfellow borrowed that metre, which lends itself so easily and fatally to profane parody, from a Finnish source, but in dealing with the legends that are interwoven with the story all the rest is peculiarly his own. At a time when the North American Indian was one of the most picturesque and fascinating figures that could take shape in the youthful imagination, "Hiawatha" of course found acceptable place, but the influence of Fenimore Cooper was too strong, and it must be confessed that Longfellow's hero proved less attractive than, say, "The Deerslayer" or "The Last of the Mohicans." There is one passage, however, in "Hiawatha" which has always had in the memory a special detachment, so that at any time, since the first reading, one could repeat it verbatim. A poet of no mean order did he seem who could write such lines as these :—

Never stoops the soaring vulture  
On his quarry in the desert,  
On the sick and wounded bison.  
But another vulture, watching

From his high aerial look-out,  
 Sees the downward plunge, and follows,  
 And a third pursues the second,  
 Coming from the invisible ether,  
 First a speck, and then a vulture,  
 Till the air is dark with pinions.  
 So disasters come not singly;  
 But as if they watched and waited,  
 Scanning one another's motions,  
 When the first descends, the others  
 Follow, follow, gathering flock-wise  
 Round their victim, sick and wounded.  
 First a shadow, then a sorrow,  
 Till the air is dark with anguish.

Then in the order of succession, among these American stories came that of "The Courtship of Miles Standish," the sturdy Captain of Plymouth, whose adventures in love-making turn so humorously upon the application of his own adage, "if you want a thing well done you must do it yourself." In the days when one used to sing of the Pilgrim fathers, how

The breaking waves dashed high  
 On a stern and rock-bound coast,  
 . . . .  
 When a band of exiles moored their barque  
 On the wild New England shore.

this poem served for purposes of further illumination, and in the love-entanglements of the Captain, John Alden, and Priscilla, an element of pleasant homely comedy was introduced into the otherwise grave and ascetic conditions of Puritan life, with which one associated the little colony of "Mayflower" voyagers. Here again the use of the hexameter lent itself, in the poet's hands, to wonderfully graphic descriptions of scenery and incident, and though the story is not one of deep passion, but moves in waves of

gentle undulation in dealing with matters of the heart, it is perhaps as popular, in its degree, as anything the poet has written, and in the sequel has falsified the prediction of at least one critic who said that from its form and treatment it could never obtain a permanent hold of the hearts of the people.

In this slight but sincere tribute to the memory of Longfellow I have perhaps dwelt too long upon early impressions—a point of view which seemed unavoidable, but which has left little space for a more comprehensive survey, and a fuller expression of appreciation. A word or two, however, must be said in this direction. Whatever may be said of the limitation of his poetical power the expression of it was wide and varied, as was the response to it in the hearts of those who came under its influence. Though it was his strong desire to create a poetical literature that should be the reflection of the life of his own country, an end to which he worked assiduously and successfully, he is quite as much European as American. Like Washington Irving, his imagination found equal material for its exercise both in the New World and the Old, and between the two his affections were equally divided; he was

A student of old books and days,  
To whom all tongues and lands were known,  
And yet a lover of his own.

As Professor of Modern Languages at Harvard University his studies in the literature of those languages were profound and scholarly. He had travelled much in Europe, and he laid under contribution the literary lore of all the countries in which he had sojourned, from Scandinavia to Italy and Spain, showing a predilection perhaps for that of Germany. So was he enabled to

embody in his poetry what he could not find in his own land, and give us

Old legends of the monkish page,  
Traditions of the saint and sage,  
Tales that have the rime of age  
And chronicles of eld.

From such sources came "The Spanish Student," "The Golden Legend," "The Tales of a Wayside Inn," in great part, and those numerous translations that go to make up so large a portion of his work. Without a knowledge of the originals it is impossible to form a critical estimate of those translations, but one is inclined to believe, as in the case of Edward Fitzgerald and his "Omar Khayyam" that there is a great deal of Longfellow in them. Remove the references to their original authors, and the ordinary reader might never suspect that they were reflected emanations from other minds. In turn his work came to be translated, and it is a remarkable evidence of the way in which he got at the common heart of humanity that his poetry, in varying degrees, has been rendered into German, Dutch, Swedish, Danish, French, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish, Polish, Bohemian, Hungarian and Russian. Besides these "Hiawatha" has been turned into Latin by Francis William Newman, "Excelsior" has been translated into Hebrew, and "The Psalm of Life" has appeared, written on a fan, in Chinese.

There is one aspect of his poetical expression which calls for a word of appreciation, and that is his success as a writer of sonnets. These are numerous and belong in a great measure to the later period of production. They are generally of excellent and finished workmanship, if one may use such a term, characterised by fine restraint, beauty of diction, and lucidity of thought. In one of the

latest, speculating on the possibilities of poetry in the future and the poet that is to be, he gives us these fine lines:—

Perhaps their lives some dreamy boy, untaught  
In schools, some graduate of the field or street,  
Who shall become a master of the art,  
An admiral sailing the high seas of thought,  
Fearless and first, and steering with his fleet  
For lands not yet laid down in any chart.

And now of our poet Longfellow, what remains to be said in the personal estimate, save that his life, we are told, was as consistently beautiful as his poetry, which was but the outward evidence of an inward grace. All his friends testify to this, telling us of the gentleness and serenity of his nature, his generosity and highmindedness. After his death Oliver Wendell Holmes wrote some memorial verses as a tribute to his friend, but which he felt to be inadequate, saying of them, "But it is all too little, for his life was so exceptionally sweet and musical that any voice of praise sounded almost like discord after it." It is gratifying to know these things because they confirm in a pre-eminent degree the early impression gained of Longfellow when he lived for one only in his poetry.

About his relative place among the poets or the endurance of his fame, we need not trouble ourselves. In recognition of his kinship with the greatest singers of our own country we have placed his bust in Westminster Abbey; for the rest we may safely leave him enshrined, as he has been and is, in the hearts of his readers, who, as long as there are "care-encumbered men," who seek the benign influence of poetry, will doubtless be found not only in this generation but in others yet to come.



## ON LONGFELLOW'S "BIRDS OF KILLINGWORTH."

By WILLIAM E. A. AXON.

THE Longfellow centenary reminds me of an interesting letter which I received from the venerable poet a quarter of a century ago. I was then, as now, interested in the protection of birds and indeed of all innocent life. In lecturing and writing on the subject I frequently referred to the beautiful story of the "Birds of Killingworth" which forms one of the delightful "Tales of a Wayside Inn." The question was sometimes raised as to whether this narrative had any basis of fact or was merely the fantasy of a poetic brain. In Longfellow's verse we read that the farmers of Killingworth annoyed by the thefts of the birds who claimed a share of the crops decided upon their extermination. At the town's meeting the only advocate for the "winged wardens" of the field was the schoolmaster who urged that what the feathered marauders carried off was only a fair payment for their exertions against insect foes of agriculture. The farmers with the unwisdom of "practical men" scorned the plea for compassion and "doomed with dreadful words to swift destruction the whole race of birds." The result of the slaughter was a plague of insects which made Killingworth "a desert without leaf or shade." The farmers

were wiser than some people for they were willing to be taught by experience, and in the Spring that followed the blight

A waggon overarched with evergreen,  
 Upon whose boughs were wicker cages hung,  
 All full of singing birds came down the street,  
 Filling the air with music wild and sweet.  
 From all the country round these birds were brought,  
 By order of the town, with anxious quest,  
 And, loosened from their wicker prisons sought  
 In wood and fields the places they loved best.  
 Singing loud canticles, which many thought  
 Were satires to the authorities addressed,  
 While others, listening in green lanes averred  
 Such lovely music never had been heard!

Longfellow with a poet's skill mingles his plea for the birds with a pretty love-story of the schoolmaster and the "fair Almira" who shares his humanitarian sentiments.

Was it fact or fiction this story of the slaughter of the birds being followed by a dire plague of insects? The poet sent the following letter which whilst putting the matter in its true light is interesting as shewing his sympathy with those who deprecate the senseless slaughter that goes on daily of so many bright and beautiful creatures.

Portland,  
July 11, 1881.

Dear Sir,

Your letter has been forwarded to me at this place, and I am glad to give you the information you desire, in regard to the "Birds of Killingworth."

The poem is founded on fact. Killingworth is a farming town on Long Island Sound, in the State of Connecticut.

Some years ago there was an animated debate in the State Legislature, and the birds were doomed, as stated in the poem.

Of course the details of the poem are my own invention, but it has substantial foundation of fact.

I sincerely sympathise with you in your exertions on behalf of the birds. In Elihu Burritt's "Foot Excursion from London to Land's End" there is a beautiful description of the place of a gentleman in Cornwall who was a great friend and protector of birds. I think it would please you to read it.

I am, Dear Sir,

Yours very truly,

HENRY W. LONGFELLOW.

Please excuse me not writing with my own hand; my eyes are a little out of order.

The information given in the poet's letter is more explicit than that contained in the note to the "Riverside Edition," which must now be regarded as the definitive and authoritative issue of the poet's works. The Editors say: "Killingworth in Connecticut was named from the English town Kenilworth in Warwickshire, and had the same orthography in early records. Sixty or seventy years ago, according to Sir Henry Hull, writing from personal recollection, 'the men of the Northern part did yearly in the Spring choose two leaders, and then the two sides were formed: the side that got beaten should pay the bills. Their special game was the hawk, the owl, the crow, the blackbird, and any other bird supposed to be mischievous to the corn. Some years each would bring them in by the bushel. This was followed up for only a few years for birds began to grow scarce.' The story based upon some such slight suggestion was Mr. Longfellow's own invention." (vol. vi., pp. 262—263.).

The passage in Burritt's book to which Longfellow directs attention is a notable one; in it the "Learned Blacksmith" describes a visit he made in company with John Harris, the "Miner Poet" to the home of the "Bird-Friend of Tregedna." This was a landowner of the noted Fox family, a lover of trees and birds. He planted 100,000

rose-trees to diversify his woodlands. Avoiding the use of either snares or cages he had won the confidence and companionship of the birds. "He has proved by the happiest illustration," says Burritt, "that any one with the law of kindness in his heart, on his tongue, and in his hand, may have the most intimate fellowship of these sweet singers, and their best songs from morning till night, without the help of snares or cages." Mr. Fox would call the birds to their breakfast by a whistle "and they would come out of the thick, green leaves of the grove and patter, twitter and flutter around and over his feet. Sometimes he would put a piece of bread between his lips, when a bright-eyed little thing would pick it out, like a humming-bird taking honey from a deep flower-bell without alighting. They became his constant companions. As soon as he stepped from his door, they were on the look-out to give him a welcome with their happy voices. They have come to know the sound of his step, his walks and recreations." One result of this friendship was that Mr. Fox "gave up the practice of shooting birds of another feather." The Bird-Friend of Tregedna was the uncle of that charming Quakeress, Caroline Fox. The domains of Tregedna and Penjerrick joined together.

As the postscript indicates Longfellow's letter is written by an amanuensis, but the signature is in the well-known and characteristic handwriting of the poet. The letter was written in July whilst he was on a visit to his native place, the city of Portland in the State of Maine. He returned to Cambridge, Massachusetts, where the greater part of his life had been spent, and in the following March America had to lament, by his death, the loss of a leader in literature, a man whose purity of spirit is reflected in his verse, and whose words have been an inspiration to many and in many lands.



## THE ETHICS OF CLOCK-WINDING.

By EDGAR ATKINS.

BROODY hens and clocks make up what they lack in variety of vocabulary by constant repetition. The motives of their utterances are very different; that of the clock is to continue its labours; that of the hen to avoid work for three weeks. Biologists are puzzled to know whether the egg or the hen is the earlier in order of date. It may be doubted if the clock came before, but it certainly goes after the key. Man can wind up a clock; a hen can wind him up; try to exclude one from a garden newly sown with lawn seed. To be wound up leads to indiscretion. In that condition, induced by receipt of an increased rate note, the writer remarked to a young lady "of full habit" that by walking about the newly-made roads she might save the parish the cost of a steam roller. "Ah," she replied, "it would take a clever person to smack your face and miss your ears."

Pancakes and clock-winding should not be overdone; a slight extra turn will spoil either. Wind up a clock and it goes; wind up a company and it stops.

If a clock be suspended by a high nail which the winder seizes too suddenly he will probably be found among the "ruins of time." Unflattering inferences are drawn if a person forget to wind his clock; much depends upon the regular discharge of the duty. It is not necessary

to catch a flea, a cough, or a creditor; but how otherwise would the most methodical person catch a train? We need not pause to consider the case of the man who can only leave home like a washing machine ejected by a gas explosion after his wife finds his hat, two daughters his gloves, his son his stick, and his maid-servant his boots.

Savage man observant of the noise and movement of a clock would probably regard it as a spirit. He is apt to fashion a God for himself and worship it, but wanting the blessing of civilization he omits the little formality of butchering those who don't.

In a house in which there is a man no clock is wound by a woman; if there be not one the clocks are better stopped. Man is now learning that if the management of the affairs of the nation be committed to some very juvenile girls and some very old women all difficulties will disappear. Readiness to undertake responsibility is often exhibited where capacity to understand its gravity is wanting.

The clock, like the domestic servant, occasions no surprise if it goes, but much if it stops. Deprived of the services of the key it stops and accepts its "altered circumstances" with resignation worthy of that with which the demise of a father in law is borne—if rich. Unlike violets and cheese it cannot attract notice by the subtle influence of scent; silence is its sole means of making known its needs. Would that infants could be induced to emulate its excellent example.

Faith will move a mountain but not a clock, though bailiffs are said to be more successful.

The head of the ordinary steel key is often similar in shape to the human ear including the slight projection from the cheek pressure upon which closes the orifice. That which is used for a "grandfather's" clock resembles the

instrument which, if applied to a dining table, indicates that company is coming and several days of surplus and stale delicacies. Not that the clock wound or unwound is of a hospitable nature; it declines to go merely if an earwig enter to oil its hair.

Among fire irons may commonly be observed an attenuated rod which discharges the duties of all the others; the clock key, like a jealous husband, will tolerate no deputy. More powerful than a bankers reference it can enable a clock to go "on tick" for an indefinite time. The least capital is invested in that whose tick makes most noise.

The influence of winding is not always for good; it often induces the clock to strike the helpless hours. But the most hardened offender never becomes completely lost to shame; it passes its hands over its face.

The clock affords an irresistible argument for vegetarians; if wound it can perform its labours without carnivorous food; the smallest fish bone introduced into its internals does not help but hinders it. So will lentil soup remarks the irreverent. Vegetarians have quite established their case; a lady too delicate to walk a quarter of a mile can dance a dozen on lemonade and cheesecake.

To wind up a clock is an excellent hint to a late staying guest. A clock is occasionally bad mannered. In order to avoid awakening sleepers the writer returning home one night from a meeting of an Ethical Society entered his house very quietly; just as he did so the hall clock violently roared "One." Bad manners are not exactly a modern characteristic. Frequently complaint is made that the behaviour of young people is much worse than formerly. The writer once had dinner with Adam who made the same observation. The seniors qualified to correct their juniors would not quite fill a hansom cab.

The industrious habits of the clock are not emulated by all its relations; the sundial which confines itself to telling the sunny hours in this climate rivals schoolmasters and highly placed clergy in the frequency and duration of its holidays.

Annuitants, superstitions, and cant phrases have long lives. It is often said you cannot put back the hands of the clock. The writer did so—it cost seven shillings and sixpence. Among other cant phrases which should be promptly consigned to the dust bin is “the rush and strain of modern life.” It is a figment of the imagination, with most of its users positive nonsense. Never were hours of labour shorter, holidays more general, or means of getting about so easy and available. We don’t rush about; vanity prompts to the pretence; we grow to fancy it is ourselves and not the locomotive that does the work. We are merely “passive assisters” sitting still to the end of our journey if not in the meantime espied by a prudent ticket inspector; that sometimes materially shortens it. What is our “rushing about” compared with the discomforts of former times? Every one should be compelled to wear an alarm clock round his neck timed to go off immediately he says “now a days.”

Whether he forgot to wind it or not a watch which had been given to a man refused to go. Repairs cost him seventeen shillings and sixpence, of which he told a friend, who remarked, “You should have had an annuity with that watch.”

Clock-winding has impressed its influence on literature; no unwound clock would have inspired Longfellow’s ‘Old clock on the Stairs’ with its weird “For ever—Never. Never—For ever,” nor would a silent instrument have suggested ‘Master Humphrey’s Clock.’

For absolute candour the clock maker is without a rival;

over his door are inscribed the letters M.B.H.I., interpreted "most buyers humbugged inside."

Till the end of the 12th century no amount of winding would induce a clock to strike, hence originated the custom of the watchman proclaiming the hours.

In an article on clocks the late Lord Grimthorpe conveyed a singularly delicate compliment "The watchman's or tell tale clocks the reader may have seen in one of the lobbies of the House of Commons and in prisons."

On the last occasion upon which the writer suffered a visit from a gentleman for winding purposes a new key of superior make lay beside the clock; on his departure an old and inferior one was there. But the clock went, so did the writer's best umbrella and his wife's aunt's bronchitis kettle. Was that the synchronization of movement or the ethics of clock winding?





## THOMAS À KEMPIS AND THE "DE IMITATIONE CHRISTI."

By GEORGE MILNER.

"THE Imitation" claims and justifies recognition, and study not only as one of the great Books of Religion, but also as a literary classic—one of the great books of the world.

Under the first category it stands on the same shelf with the Sacred Writings, with Augustine and St. Francis, with Luther and Fénelon, with Bunyan and Jeremy Taylor, with Butler, Wesley, and John Henry Newman. In the second with Shakespeare and all those who have been preeminent in sounding the depths and intricacies of the human spirit.

What, I may now ask, is the test we apply to that which we call a classic? It must be among the foremost of its kind, individually unique, commendable in its style as well as in its substance, making in some sense a universal appeal, and, above all, securing in the long run a wide acceptance. "The Imitation" it may be safely held complies with all these conditions. Its immense vogue is indisputable, for in its circulation and in its multiplication of copies it is surpassed by the Bible alone. A complete bibliography has never been produced, but all the known facts confirm the conclusion just arrived at.

## I.

The manuscript of "The Imitation" was begun early in the 15th Century, and, having been arranged as four books with separate titles, was issued while still in manuscript. A very large number of transcripts of portions had been made by the Brothers of the Common Life and other monkish scribes before the end of the 15th Century. The number of manuscripts now existing is said to be about four hundred, but this large number will only represent a part, perhaps a small part, of those actually transcribed. The most interesting of these copies is one which is preserved in the Royal Library at Brussels and which after much investigation is decided, upon internal evidence to be an autograph manuscript executed by À Kempis himself.

It is often said that the first printed edition appeared in 1486. But this is an error. An edition, also at Augsburg, was published by Günther Zamer in 1471 or 1472. In view of the controversy as to the real authorship it is important to note that in Zamer's edition the treatise is attributed to À. Kempis while he was still living. By the end of the century no less than eighty editions had been issued including those which appeared in England.

Translations into various languages were begun even in the author's life-time. The first English translation was made by a Canon of Windsor at the command of Margaret, Countess of Richmond and Derby, in 1502, and printed by Richard Pynson in 1503. De Quincey makes an ingenious suggestion to account for what he calls "the enormous and seemingly incredible popularity" of the book. The Bible at that time, he argues, was practically a sealed volume, but "a whisper ran through the Western nations of Europe that the work of Thomas À Kempis contained

some slender rivulets of Truth silently stealing away into light from that interdicted fountain. . . . The book came forward as an answer to the sigh of Christian Europe for light from heaven."

Some idea may now be given of the number of translations and editions which have appeared. In Italy there have been over 370 translations. In France up to 1841 there had been 70. In 1828 there was in the Library of the Vatican translations in the Catalan, Castilian, Flemish, Portuguese, Dutch, Bohemian, Polish, Greek, English, Hungarian, Illyrian, Japanese, Chinese, Arabic, Turkish, Armenian, Prussian, and other languages. A collection formed at Cologne during the 18th Century, though confessedly incomplete, included five hundred distinct editions.

It has been calculated that the editions and translations number three thousand, but it is believed that even this estimate is incomplete. Dr. Johnson in his day said that the book had been printed as many times as there were months since its first production. I give these figures not only because they are bibliographically interesting, but because they force upon us the question—What kind of book must this have been, and what are the qualities either in matter or in manner which have led to a dissemination so extraordinary? To this question an answer may be attempted later.

## II.

Something must now be said of the author of "The Imitation." And first we are obliged to ask—Who *was* the author? Some years ago it would have been more difficult to give a definite reply than it is to-day. For many years the authorship of "The Imitation" was the subject of a grave and even acrimonious dispute among

the learned. Holland, France, and Italy each laid claims to the honour of having given birth to the writer of the great book; more than one hundred and twenty separate works have dealt with this controversy.

The chief claimants were three: Thomas À Kempis, Jean Gerson, Chancellor of the University of Paris, and Jean Gersen, the Abbot of a Benedictine Monastery in Piedmont from 1220 to 1230.\* The second of these was born in 1375. He rose to great distinction as a Canon of Notre Dame and Chancellor of the University of Paris. Afterwards he suffered from persecution and hid himself among the mountains of Bavaria. He was subsequently heard of at Lyons where he kept a small school. It is related that the only payment he asked for from the children was that they should repeat for him daily this brief prayer: "Oh Lord, have mercy on Thy poor servant Gerson!" He died in 1429 at the age of sixty-six, much beloved by the people of Lyons.

Of the life of Gersen nothing seems to be known, not even the date of his birth or death, but his name is found on many of the old manuscripts of "The Imitation." It is said that he was an Italian.

So far as I have been able in the past to follow the very complicated controversy it always appeared to me that À Kempis had the strongest claim and I may add now that the further the investigation is pursued the more clear does it become that the author can have been no other than the poor monk of Mount St. Agnes, of lowly origin and

\* Since the above was written an elaborate treatise on the subject of "The Imitation" has been published by M. De Montmorency in which the case of a fourth claimant is discussed at great length. This long forgotten competitor was an Englishman, Walter Hilton, an Augustinian Canon, who died in 1395. It is said that his claim was generally admitted in England during the 15th century. The evidence, however, is of too uncertain a nature to affect seriously the claim of À Kempis.

simple manners, but with a strong desire for learning, natural or hereditary, and a disposition which led him to desire a life of religious seclusion. He was born in 1379 or 1380 at Kempen in the diocese of Cologne, and in later life was known as Thomas à Kempis—Thomas of Kempen. His real name was Thomas Hammerlein. His father was a worker in metal and his mother, Gertrude, is said to have kept a school for children. He was always studious and became a pupil at the Grammar School of Kempen. When not at school he helped his father in his trade. It is easy to imagine the kind of home-life which he led, especially when we learn that a brother who was fifteen years older than Thomas had already been devoted by his parents to the monastic life. At the age of thirteen Thomas was admitted, through the kindness of Florentius, the Founder, to a Religious Community at Deventer known as The Brothers of the Common Life. This Brotherhood owed its existence to a movement in favour of Reformation within the Roman Church, and was also, to some extent, the result of the attention being given at the time to the study of Mysticism. Purity, simplicity and real devotion were its watchwords. Here he carried forward his education. When he was nineteen Florentius advised him to take monastic orders adding these words, "All monastic orders are good, but that of St. Augustine is not the least in excellence or celebrity." To this Thomas replied, "O father that which I have hoped for has now come to pass." In 1401 he became an Augustinian, entering the Monastery of Mount St. Agnes of which his elder brother John was already the Prior. In 1406 on the Feast of Corpus Christi he became a Canon Regular, and at a later date was made Sub Prior.

Thus began the long monastic life of à Kempis—a life of seclusion, of labour, of meditation, and of con-

tinuous acts of devotion, ended only when death came to him at the age of ninety-one.

In addition to the composition of his great work he was much occupied in the transcription of Biblical and other manuscripts. He also wrote a considerable number of separate treatises. To some of them he gave poetical titles which remind us of Ruskin's practice, such as "The Garden of Roses" and "The Valley of Lilies." The best known of these books, "The Soliloquy," is said to come nearest in excellence to "The Imitation." Its character may be gathered from the title of the first chapter, "On the Desire of a Soul seeking God." In addition to these he wrote some sermons and a few poems and hymns.

Of personal details there are few extant. Anyone who has read "The Imitation" would expect this. The author of such a book would be sure to efface himself and be to himself a man of little account. He continually insists upon the necessity for seclusion and quiet as the concomitants of a holy life. "Keep thyself as a stranger and pilgrim upon earth," he said, "Keep thy heart free and lifted up to God, because thou hast here no continuing city." "Busy not thyself in matters which appertain to others; neither do thou entangle thyself with the affairs of thy betters." "It is commendable in a *religious person* seldom to go abroad, to be unwilling to see or to be seen." "A merry going out bringeth often a mournful return home. . . . If thou hadst not gone abroad and hearkened to idle rumours thou wouldest the better have preserved thy peace of mind." Such sentiments as these are of continual occurrence throughout the book and clearly indicate the temper and tendencies of the writer. A few brief records there are, however, from which we may arrive at some idea of the man. As I read "The Imitation" I often seem to see him in his narrow cell, upon his knees, or sitting

at his desk with head bent over the manuscript he is transcribing, or again walking in the cloisters with a book in his hand when the evening sun streams upon his placid face. In the few doubtful portraits which remain of him he is always represented with a book; and it is known that he took for a motto—"In Hoeckens und Boeckens"— "In little corners and little books," and sometimes it was "In een Hoecken met een Boecken." In *one* little corner with *one* little book." I can only add that he is said to have been of small stature with an intelligent face, a broad forehead, and piercing eyes. Although suffering from many of the infirmities of old age his sight was unimpaired even to the end of his long life, and to the last he was remarkable for the devout manner in which with a clear voice he always sang the daily psalms in the sanctuary.

### III.

I have now to consider what is the nature of "The Imitation"—what it is and what it is not. It is curious that the familiar title by which it is now universally known does not properly belong to it. The words are merely those which indicate the subject of the first chapter of the first book—thus, "Of the imitation of Christ, and contempt of all the vanities of the world." The words do not occur again and À Kempis himself gave no title to the work as a whole. "Musica Ecclesiastica" was one of the titles given to it.

"The Imitation" as we know it, and indeed as À Kempis left it, consists of four books largely independent of each other and to these the writer gave distinct titles. I need not enumerate them. They all deal with the spiritual life under various aspects. The four books are divided into short chapters, and to each of these a subject

heading is given. The fourth book, it should be said, has a distinct character. It deals only with the subject of the sacrament, and as it is written purely from the Catholic standpoint it has been omitted from some English editions. It is important to observe that "The Imitation" is neither a theological treatise nor a manual of doctrine. It is a book of pure devotion and is intended simply to suggest and guide holy meditation and converse with God. The element of disputation is happily absent. The fundamental truths of Christianity are taken for granted. They are not made the subject of argument. It has been observed that in this respect the authors of two immortal books, the "The Divine Comedy" and "The Imitation" are alike. The creed of each of these writers is "definite and unquestioned, always meeting and demanding fresh individual application but neither admitting of modification nor requiring individual re-assertion." In virtue of this quality the work of A. Kempis belongs to a certain class of books, small in number—at the head of which may stand "The Confessions of St. Augustine"—and certain hymns like those of St. Bernard in ancient times, and in later days like some of those written by Charles Wesley and James Montgomery, by Keble, by Newman, and by Faber. These are all lifted into a purely spiritual region which is above and independent of all theological distinctions and are therefore freely used by persons widely differing in their religious opinions. I do not say that "The Imitation" is in no sense dogmatic but its dogmatism does not extend beyond those few simple and fundamental beliefs without which Christianity in its many and varied forms is impossible. It is necessary to insist upon this because herein lies one at least of the answers which may be given to the really perplexing question—How did "The Imitation" come to secure what may be even described as an

affectionate and intimate acceptance from persons of apparently divergent views and tendencies? Another point to be noted with regard to the book is that notwithstanding its deep and mystical spirituality—although À Kempis was not in the ordinary sense a mystic—you often come across passages which reveal a shrewd common-sense with regard to what are called the things of the world. Ullman said of Thomas that “he was the best master of practical wisdom the Brothers ever reared.” In frequent perusals of the volume I have often lighted upon sentences which might be detached from the religious context and issued as a small volume under some such title as “The Wisdom of the Just.” Indeed this characteristic has been put forward as a proof that Jean Gerson, the Chancellor of the University of Paris and a man of affairs, was the real author of “The Imitation,” and not the cloistered monk, À Kempis, who could have known little of the world. The explanation I think is to be found in this—that he was preeminently a keen and piercing student of human nature—and human nature has a wonderful way of repeating itself under varying circumstances, every man being in himself a microcosm—that he looked into his own heart as well as into those of his companions in the monastery and could estimate with unerring precision the common tendencies towards good or evil, and determine what kind of action would result under given conditions. He was also, it may be added, eminently sane as indeed all truly great writers are, and never made false deductions from his own premises. Above all he must be credited with a spiritual insight of extraordinary penetration. The sorrows, the temptations, the pitfalls, the consolations and the raptures of the soul were all to him an open book.

“The Imitation” has, however, its limitations and

deficiencies and they all spring, as we might expect, from the same source—the monastic element. The deficiencies which strike me most in reading the book are three—the absence of considerations referring to the home-life (this, of course, is natural); the small importance which seems to be attached to intercourse with friends, even among those who were resident in the monastery; and lastly, you often feel that too much weight is given to the saving of the individual soul and too little to the spiritual well-being of others.

#### IV.

I must now give some idea of the almost universal acceptance which the book has received. Only by doing this is it possible to induce a right conception of a phenomenon as extraordinary as any that have been recorded in the history of literature.

It is not only that the appreciations are usually given in language evidently sincere, and yet of a kind which might be called uncritical eulogy—that need not be a matter for surprise—the amazing thing is that this unanimity of opinion should have come from the most divergent quarters, from persons of all periods—since the book was issued—of all countries, of all creeds, and of no creeds; from believers in Christianity of every shade, ranging from the followers of Loyola, the Jesuit, to those of John Wesley, Positivists and Agnostics, poets, philosophers and scientists, men of action and men of letters. Pascal said of “*The Imitation*” “One expects only a book and finds a man.” Molière consoled himself with its pages, Corneille translated much of it into rhyme. Leibnitz, distinguished alike for his knowledge of science and philosophy and indeed for his universal scholarship, said, “Happy is he who puts its contents into practice, and is not satisfied with

merely admiring them." Even Rousseau during a time of adversity was found to have made it his daily and nightly companion; Fontenelle said it was the finest book ever issued from the hand of man; Dr. Johnson said, "The Imitation" was a book which the world had opened its arms to receive"; John Wesley was captivated by it and published a version for the use of his followers. In his opinion the book contained "all that relates to Christian perfection." Lamenais said, "It had made more saints than all the books of controversy"; Comte, "That it was an inextinguishable treasure of true wisdom, and had been to him for years one of the principal daily sources of nourishment and consolation to his soul"; Louis of Bavaria made such constant use of it that his copy was worn out; Prince Eugene of Savoy had it with him in all his campaigns, and Lord Wolseley carried it in his pocket when in the field. Charles Kingsley speaks of the "precious sentences of Thomas À Kempis," and says that his book has been the school of many a noble heart"; Matthew Arnold's judgment was that it was "the most exquisite document after those of the New Testament of all that the Christian spirit has ever inspired"; Robert Alfred Vaughan, the author of "Hours with the Mystics," says that À Kempis "can be understood without learning, appreciated without taste, and thousands in castle and cloister prayed and wept over his earnest page."

These appreciations might be extended to many times their present length, but I will only adduce one other testimony. It is from George Eliot, and coming from such a source it has great weight. In "The Mill on the Floss" she refers to À Kempis thus: "The small old-fashioned book, for which you need only pay sixpence at a bookstall, works miracles to this day, turning bitter waters into sweetness. . . . It was written down by a hand that waited

for the heart's prompting. . . . And so it remains to all time a lasting record of human needs and human consolations, the voice of a brother who, ages ago, felt and suffered and renounced." It is worth noting that George Eliot took from "The Imitation" the title of one of her most beautiful short poems, "The Choir Angelical." The phrase occurs in the 48th Chapter of the Third Book, and was, in fact, part of a quotation made by À Kempis from one of his own hymns.

I have given these quotations somewhat freely because by no words of my own could I so surely bring home to the reader the entirely unique position which the book has gained. The testimony it is true is an unbroken chorus of praise, but it is redeemed, I think, from monotony and unreality by the singular diversity of the persons from whom it proceeds. It is impossible in the space at my disposal to give all the favourable opinions which might have been adduced, but I may mention a few of the more prominent names: Sir Thomas More, Bossuet, Lamartine, Michelet, St. Beuve, Renan; and among modern Englishmen, Coleridge and Carlyle.

Recorded opinions on the other side are not numerous. The criticism of Dean Milman is well-known and Jowett, the Master of Balliol, was an emphatic opponent. He thinks the religious sentiment in "The Imitation" is exaggerated and contrary to human nature and asks, "Would it be possible to combine in a manual of piety religious fervour with perfect good sense and knowledge of the world? This has never been attempted, and would be a work worthy of a great genius." As I have already said, this is exactly what the genius of À Kempis attempted and achieved. But Jowett goes on to reveal with an ingenuousness amounting to simplicity the thought that was in his mind. "Is it possible

for me," he says, "perhaps ten years hence, to write a new Thomas À Kempis, going as deeply into the foundations of human life, and yet not revolting the common sense of the nineteenth century by his violent contrast between this world and another?" (Life II., 151-2) Vain ambition! Jowett's natural temperament, his scholastic training, and a certain strain of intellectual arrogance for which he was famous, made him as unfitted as most men could be to write a "new À Kempis." A profound humility it must be remembered was at the very root of "The Imitation" and whatever accomplishments and virtues Jowett had—and they were many—to this saving grace of humility he had no claim. There is one chapter in À Kempis which, in his new "Imitation," Jowett would certainly not have copied. It bears the quaint title—"Of the humble conceit of ourselves."

## V.

I must now deal briefly with the question of form and style. So many of the English translations have been in prose that few ordinary readers ever suspect that it was really a poem. It is written for the most part in a somewhat irregular Latin verse, both rhymed and unrhymed. The rhythm is based not on quantity, but on accentuation, and assonance is of frequent occurrence. The earliest title by which the book was known was, as I have already said, "Musica Ecclesiastica," a title which truly indicated its metrical character. The style though compressed is singularly lucid. The meaning is always clear, the thought definite, and the expression adequate. There are no cryptic passages to perplex or delight the laborious commentator. Its writer was familiar with many books—he had written down the whole of the Bible with his own hand—and he had the literary faculty of what I may call

implicit quotation, of judicious absorption, and of transferring to his own pages in a subtle manner the strain both in thought and cadence of many a noble sentence from the sacred writings and from later classic authors. His lucidity of thought and transparency of expression so impressed Lamenais that he spoke of his style as, in one word, "Celestial." I may observe here that St. Augustine's great classic—"The Confessions" is written in a style much more diffuse and involved than that of A Kempis, but he has the same felicitous habit of quotation. There are few pages in his book which do not prove this.

Even in the prose translations of "The Imitation" the fervour and exaltation of the poetic spirit break out. Of this abundant examples might be given. Sometimes even the language becomes metrical in the translations, though written out as prose. One instance may be offered:

When shall I have solid peace,  
Peace secure and undisturbed,  
Peace within and peace without,  
Peace every way assured?

## VI.

The style of "The Imitation," apparently artless, and yet convincing, had no doubt much to do with its acceptance by so many poets and men of letters. The plain man was fascinated by its transparent simplicity and its obvious sincerity but that which appealed to all alike and has made it imperishable, was undoubtedly the writer's great knowledge of the human heart, gained by fearless introspection, and gathered by observation, close, shrewd, and constant although in a confessedly contracted sphere. This knowledge was of the same kind as that which goes to the making of great dramatists and novelists, and which gives

to his work and to his life a deep psychological and literary interest over and above that which arises from the religious element. His was a dedicated life like those of Dante and Milton—dedicated to religion and, in a degree, to poetry. In a sense he was a man of one book. He wrote other things it is true—sermons, hymns, treatises and chronicles of his monastery, but it was into “The Imitation” that he poured all that was best in him, and to that he gave the chief labour of his solitary hours. The manuscript was not completed until 1441 when he was over sixty years of age. As you read, it is impossible to resist the conviction that every sentence both in its import and its diction was the result of scrupulous and even affectionate care in saying what was best as it might best be said.

Of course the book is not to be taken as a complete presentation of the religious life, but rather as that which appealed to one who had in all sincerity embraced and accepted, in one of its purest forms, the monastic idea. This, however, although it necessarily narrows its scope does not detract so much as might be expected from its immense value as a psychological study of human nature. The feelings and sentiments of À Kempis are not fictitious, and, if only a part, are a very real part of man's nature on the spiritual side, and are as essential an element in a diagnosis of our whole being, as for instance the love for others, or the love of self, as jealousy, hatred, or ambition, intellectual curiosity, optimism, pessimism, doubt. This is too often forgotten. The unbiassed student of human life will recognise that he cannot afford to neglect any element in the complex problem. He will take the whole man as he is—infinite in his faculties—and perceive that he must include in his categories Augustine and Francis of Assisi, and Thomas À Kempis, John Tauler, Father Da-

mien, and General Gordon as well as a Herod, a Nero, a Messalina, a Benvenuto Cellini and a Cæsar Borgia.

The conclusion which I arrive at, therefore, is twofold. First, that the works and ways of these lofty and enfranchised spirits are at least as well worth our study as are those of the baser sort; and, second, that their experiences are not impalpable dreams outside the region of scientific investigation, but psychologic facts which must be reckoned with.

In other words these spiritual pilgrimages from darkness into light, from things evanescent and material to things unchanging and eternal, these searchings of many hearts, these deep meditations, these ecstatic visions even, are actual phenomena in the development of a soul, as real, perhaps more essentially real, to the student of human psychology as are the changes involved in the production of a crystal, the growth of a complex flower from its embryo, or the evolution of a galaxy of stars for the student of nature in its scientific aspects.





## THE GENIUS OF KEATS.

By THE REV. G. R. GOODALL.

A N appreciation of the genius of Keats which turns away from the facts of his life may seem lacking in sympathy. His place is among those "mighty poets in their misery dead" whose stories chequer with such heavy shadows the records of our literature. The "Letters" to which we owe all our insight into his nature comprise in their brief span of four years more joys and sufferings than enter into generations of common experience:—

"The life of a long life  
Distilled to a mere drop, falling like a tear  
Upon the world's cold cheek to make it burn  
For ever."

Yet during those few dark years Keats accomplished a work in Poetry which is singularly uninfluenced by the disasters of his fortunes or the agonies of his spirit. There is no parallel in English literature to the detachment in which his art stands off from his life. It is true that this is less the result of deliberate self-suppression than of natural instinct. He held no strict theory as to the impersonality of the artist. On the contrary, his early letters and poems abound in anticipations of the larger utterance which experience and discipline should give to his muse. In the Odes and in the fragmentary "Vision

of Hyperion" he does in fact reveal something of the bitter wisdom which he learnt in suffering. But that schooling was too harsh to aid the development of his soul along the lines of his early hopes and purposes. And taking his work as it stands, he remains the most impersonal, the least subjective of poets. In the notes that follow, therefore, I shall attempt an estimate of his genius and art without explicit reference to the tragic story of his life.

(1) The name of Keats is so often associated with the more ornate and exotic elements of his poetry alone, that it is necessary to point out his high place among the poets of Nature. A deep love of Nature and a rare power of natural magic were the earliest marks of poetic genius which his work manifested, and they pervade everything he has written. A distinguished foreign critic, George Brandes, uses an unfortunate simile in contrasting Keats with Wordsworth, when he says that the latter leads us into the true realm of Flora, while with Keats we step into a hothouse. There is a pathetic passage in a letter of the last year of the poet's life, which should have made such a criticism impossible. "How astonishingly," he writes, "does the chance of leaving the world impress a sense of its natural beauties upon us! I muse with the greatest affection on every flower I have known from my infancy—their shapes and colours are as new to me as if I had just created them with a superhuman fancy. I have seen foreign flowers in hothouses, of the most beautiful nature, but I do not care a straw for them. The simple flowers of our spring are what I want to see again." And our simple English flowers everywhere lend their colour and fragrance to his verse. He has his favourites among them, the laburnum, a townsman's choice, the musk-rose, and the marigold. There is an open-air quality in his

poetry, which, not less than his love of flowers, stamps him as a true poetic child of Chaucer. He delights, especially, in the purity of early morning, and the glory of summer. The opening pages of "Endymion" are filled with the light, the dewy freshness, the awakening stir of early day:—

" Rain-scented eglantine  
Gave temperate sweets to that well-wooing sun ;  
The lark was lost in him ; cold springs had run  
To warm their chilliest bubbles in the grass ;  
Man's voice was on the mountains ; and the mass  
Of Nature's lives and wonders pulsed tenfold,  
To feel this sunrise and its glories old."

But "the poetry of earth is never dead" for Keats. He conveys into his verse, with equal realism, the "bitter chill" of winter, as in the first stanza of "St. Agnes Eve," the golden haze and mellow fruitfulness" of autumn, and the drenched atmosphere and pale verdure of early spring, as in the wonderful lines in the "Eve of St. Mark":—

" The city streets were clean and fair  
From wholesome drench of April rains ;  
And, on the western window panes,  
The chilly sunset faintly told  
Of unmatured green valleys cold,  
Of the green, thorny, bloomless hedge,  
Of rivers new with spring-tide sedge,  
Of primroses by sheltered rills,  
And daisies on the aguish hills."

The treatment of Nature in Keats' early poems is very simple, little more than a loving inventory of her "world of blisses," her flowers, birds, streams and leafy dells. It is very much a town dweller's delight in open-air and country sights and sounds. His early sonnets especially

are inspired with the zest of one "who has been long in city pent" for brief plunges into the green world beyond. The occasional felicities of these early poems, such as "The little noiseless noise among the leaves, born of the very sigh that silence heaves," the delicate drawing of "Sweet peas on tip-toe for a flight," the skylark that "shakes the tremulous dew from his lush clover covert," have passed into our common poetic treasury. "Endymion" blends a wealth of little known but exquisite touches of English pastoral charms with an ideal scenery as strange as that of Shelley's "Alastor," and jewelled splendours reminiscent of the Arabian Nights. Much of the richness of effect which marks the narrative poems is due to their nature imagery. What a wild beauty there is in the vision in "Isabella," where the murdered lover describes his forest grave, and his shadowy consciousness of the "little sounds of life around him knelling":—

" Red whortleberries droop above my head,  
 And a large flint-stone weighs upon my feet;  
 Around me beeches and high chestnuts shed  
 Their leaves and prickly nuts; a sheepfold bleat  
 Comes from beyond the river to my bed."

The beauty of Nature, again, forms not the least precious element in the unique and complex charm of the Odes. The Ode to "Autumn" is flawless and unapproachable among English poems of Nature. It is a living landscape, though purely classical, that Keats re-creates from the dim frieze traced on the Grecian Urn. And the perfect fifth stanza of the "Nightingale" illustrates, for Matthew Arnold, the ease with which Keats passes from "Greek radiance" to the "natural magic" which that critic has taught us to call "Celtic." Again I must quote:—

" I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,  
Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs,  
But, in embalmed darkness, guess each sweet  
Wherewith the seasonable month endows  
The grass, the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild;  
White hawthorn, and the pastoral eglantine;  
Fast fading violets covered up in leaves;  
And mid-May's eldest child  
The coming musk-rose full of dewy wine,  
The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves."

But for "Hyperion"—that mighty fragment which reveals so many otherwise unsuspected qualities of Keats' genius—we should have to acknowledge that the range of his Nature poetry was limited to the smiling, richly-wooded, fertile southern scenery amidst which he wrote. In "Hyperion," however, the fatal tour through the Cumbrian district and Scotland has left its traces on every page. The background to that dim warfare of the gods is a world of "beetling gloomy steeps," "sad spaces of oblivion," gulfs and "chasms old." Every stroke in the austere landscape is in perfect accord with the huge, despairing figures of the doomed Saturnian dynasty. The nature-imagery is adopted with the same supreme art. The voices of the Titans are like "a roaring in the bleak-grown pines when winter lifts his voice." Their recumbent forms are compared to

"A dismal cirque  
Of Druid stones upon a forlorn moor  
When the chill rain begins at shut of eve  
In dull November, and their chancel vault,  
The heaven itself, is blinded throughout night."

Beyond the solemn imaginative blending of Nature's tremendous aspects with tremendous mythical woe in "Hyperion" Keats did not rise. He never attained to Wordsworth's mystic sense of a spiritual presence "still

more deeply interfused" in Nature's works, nor did he, with Shelley, blend the exaltation which she inspires with high hopes for the future of humanity. But his perception of beauty was far keener than Wordsworth's, and his grasp on the world of sense far surer than Shelley's.

It has often been said that Keats is the most sensuous of poets. The epithet carries with it no shade of reproach. An extraordinary keenness of physical organisation was, as Professor Masson has shown, no small part of his natural endowment. If in these days of anthologies anyone should be tempted to compile an anthology of the senses he would draw very largely on Keats and find ample material for each of the five divisions of his subject. What sumptuous tables he has spread, rich in colour, flavour and perfume, yet far too delicate to appeal to a rude appetite, and strictly, I think, vegetarian! The description of the wedding banquet in "Lamia" blends in one sumptuous feast of sense, the lustre of mirrored walls, the odorous clouds of fifty censers fed with myrrh and spiced wood, the sphered tables and silken seats, the heavy gold of cups and goblets, the store of Ceres' horn, wine in huge vessels, the cold full sponge to pleasure pressed upon the hands and feet of the guests and the fragrant oils poured on their hair, their white robes, garlands of every green and every scent, the strains of powerful instruments, and the vowelled undersong of fluent Greek discourse!

In such a temperament as Keats' there are, of course, perils both for art and for the conduct of life. And it is idle to assert that he escaped them in either direction. In his poetry, as some critic has said, he too often seems to sit as a luxurious guest at his own feast of sense. Without a trace of coarseness or baseness of appetite, he yet inclines to gloat over the beauties that he creates. His worst

errors of taste are to be found in his love-passages, which it is impossible to read with patience. They are not erotic in the full-blooded manner, but they have a fulsome ness, a cloying quality which renders them intolerable. In the presence of feminine beauty his lovers utter breathless ejaculations and promptly swoon away!

(2) The chief elements of Keats' mental endowment as a poet are a profuse fancy, and an imagination that seized its objects with extraordinary concreteness and intensity. He has an early sonnet which begins with the too prophetic words:—

“ When I have fears that I may cease to be  
Before my pen has gleaned my teeming brain.”

The words are as sober as most of his estimates of his own nature and powers. Poetry, from the moment when he definitely abandoned himself to it, kept him in “a continual burning of thought.” He writes from the Isle of Wight in 1817, while he is working on “Endymion”:

“ I find I cannot exist without poetry—without eternal poetry—half the day will not do—the whole of it. I began with a little, but habit has made me a Leviathan. I had become all in a tremble, from not having written anything of late; the sonnet over leaf did me good.” (It was the fine Sonnet on the Sea.) “ I slept the better last night for it; this morning, however, I am nearly as bad again. Just now I opened Spenser, and the first lines I saw were these:—

“ The noble heart that harbours virtuous thought  
And is with child of glorious great intent,  
Can never rest until it forth hath brought  
Th’ eternal brood of glory excellent.”

It is interesting to note that a poet of even greater exuberance of fancy, Robert Browning, was conscious in his early years of the same urgent need to deliver himself in hot haste. In a letter to Alfred Domett he

adopts a grotesque variation of Spenser's metaphor. "I felt so instinctively from the beginning," he writes, "that unless I tumbled out a dozen more or less of conceptions I should bear them about for ever, and year by year get straiter and stiffer in those horrible cross-bones with the long name, and at last parturition would be a curse indeed." This compulsion to create is, I think, with Keats, the secret of "*Endymion*." His curious determination in carrying out that task, in spite of the disapproval of such good judges as Leigh Hunt and Shelley, and with a very clear consciousness of the immaturities of his work, implies a kind of intellectual purgation. The process, however wholesome to a youthful poet, is somewhat trying in its results for his readers. "I have read '*Endymion*,'" writes Shelley. "Much credit is due to me for having done so." And no doubt most of us, after a first reading of that poem, have felt the same virtuous glow. The Quarterly Reviewer was not without justification for his remark that "*Endymion*" reads like an interminable exercise in "*bouts-rimés*." It has all the confusion and incoherence of such a poetic pastime. What he omitted to notice was the astonishing opulence of beauty and fancy which Keats has poured into the loose framework of the poem.

Disciplined and controlled by his maturer art, this wealth of imagery becomes one of Keats' most characteristic charms. His poetry continually "surprises by a fine excess." Take as for instance the sestet of his sonnet "*After Dark Vapours*"—a chain of similes subdued to the same quiet tone:—

"The calmest thoughts come round us; as of leaves  
Budding—fruit ripening in stillness—autumn suns  
Smiling at eve upon the quiet sheaves—  
Sweet Sappho's cheek—a smiling infant's breath—  
The gradual sand that thro' an hour-glass runs—  
A woodland rivulet—a poet's death."

This manner reaches its highest perfection in the stanza of "St. Agnes Eve" describing the sleep of Madeleine, with its cumulative rise of expression and the rich contrast of its last pair of metaphors. The maiden's spirit is "fatigued away" in sleep,—

" Flown like a thought until the morrow day ;  
Blissfully havened both from joy and pain ;  
*Clasped like a missal where swart Paynims pray ;*  
Blinded alike from sunshine and from rain,  
*As though a rose should shut, and be a bud again.*"

The whole poem is superbly adorned with the choicest similes. The simple theme is overlaid with gems like a Russian Eikon.

But this profuseness of fancy is only one side of Keats' poetic mind. Even more characteristic is the concreteness of his imagination, and the brooding intensity with which it works out every detail of its conceptions. His boyish delight in the pages of Lemprière and Spence was but the evidence of the vivid objectifying powers of his mind. "He never beheld an oak without seeing the Dryad," we are told. And we may say that had there not been these divinities of earth and sea and air Keats would have invented them. The grandest works of Nature were not complete for him without their tutelary deities. Fingal's Cave inspired him with one of the very few poems produced during the reckless fatigues of his Scottish tour. In the heart of that cathedral of the sea this is what he beholds :—

" Lo ! I saw one sleeping there  
On the marble cold and bare,  
While the surges washed his feet,  
And his garment white did beat  
Drenched about the sombre rocks."

It is Lycidas whom he has installed as " pontiff-priest " of that sea-girt temple, upon the hint of Milton's reference to the " stormy Hebrides." In one stanza of the Ode to Autumn the spirit of the season is painted on four panels—in each an exquisitely finished figure against its fitting background :—

" Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store?  
Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find  
Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,  
Thy hair soft lifted by the winnowing wind ;  
Or on a half-reaped furrow sound asleep,  
Drowsed with the fume of poppies, while thy hook  
Spares the next swath and all its twined flowers :  
And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep  
Steady thy laden head across a brook ;  
Or by a cyder-press, with patient look,  
Thou watchest the last oozings hour by hour."

The arts of painting and sculpture have inevitably been called in to illustrate the salient qualities of Keats' poetry. Sometimes he seems to work upon a recognisable original in one or other of the sister arts. The glowing processional ode to Bacchus in " Endymion " recalls of course Titian's great picture. And the drawing of his mythological figures reproduces the conventional symbols of classic art which he had learnt from the illustrations in Spence. But Keats was far too great a poet to descend to mere word painting. He attempts no impossible " transmutation of values " in art. Epithets drawn directly from the language of colour and form he uses with a wise economy; and the vivid and rich effects which he produces are due to those complex associations and suggestions which only the art of poetry can command. Lines such as

" The Naiad 'mid her reeds  
Pressed her cold finger closer to her lips ;"

evoke a statue, but they do not describe a statue. Or, take the awe-inspiring figure of Cybele in "Endymion":

"Forth from a rugged arch, in the dusk below  
Came mother Cybele! alone—alone—  
In sombre chariot; dark foldings thrown  
About her majesty, and front death-pale,  
With turrets crowned. Four maned lions hale  
The sluggish wheels; solemn their toothed maws,  
Their surly eyes brow-hidden, heavy paws  
Uplifted drowsily, and nervy tails  
Cowling their tawny brushes. Silent sails  
This shadowy queen athwart, and faints away  
In another gloomy arch."

This passage owes its effect to touches which the poet only can employ, the solemn note "alone—alone"; the epithets "sombre," "death-pale," "shadowy," "gloomy," the "sluggish" chariot wheels, the lions' heavy paws uplifted "drowsily."

In a world of shapes so concrete and so minutely realised as that of Keats' creation there is no room for mystery. With perhaps the exception of that haunting ballad "La Belle Dame Sans Merci," the "Renascence of Wonder" owes nothing to Keats. The supernatural enters into his works in many of its forms—myths of early Greece, metamorphosis of classic decadence, superstition and vision of the Middle Ages; but it is the supernatural brought down to earth, and flooded with the light of day. The fatal serpent-woman—the Lamia of his poem—passes through her transformation from reptile to human form before our eyes, and the brilliantly coloured episode is a fine commentary on Keats' maxim that the "excellency of every art is its intensity, capable of making all disagreeables evaporate from their being in close relationship with beauty." The whole conception of the Lamia is a suggestive contrast to Coleridge's Lady Geraldine in

"Christabel"—a similar study of maleficent feminine beauty whose secret is, however, gradually revealed in elusive hints and mysterious suggestions. In "Isabella" again, the vision of her lover is not a vision—it is a resurrection of the flesh. The murdered man comes with the marks of his forest tomb upon him, its loam still clings to his cheeks. Terror is expressly excluded from the scene:—

" Its eyes, though wild, were still all dewy bright  
With love, and kept all phantom fear aloof  
From the poor girl by magic of their light."

(3) An enormous amount of labour has been expended by Keats' editors, Mr. W. T. Arnold, Mr. Buxton Forman, and Mr. de Selincourt in tracing the sources of Keats' diction and the models of his metrical forms. Students of our poetry will always be grateful for their work, though not a small part of it consists in cancelling one another's suggestions, a process which the excess of zeal displayed in this kind of textual criticism renders very necessary. When the weary student is assured, for instance, that he must reckon Robinson Crusoe among the sources of Keats' English he may naturally rebel. And many of the parallel passages adduced by Keats' editors seem to me to be parallel only in the sense that there is no possible point of contact between them and the lines which they are supposed to have suggested. Two facts stand out in Keats' verse, account for them as we may; his abounding felicities of phrase, and his rare verbal music. His most unequal poems—the sonnets for example—are seldom unredeemed by some memorable line. They have the fine, spontaneous openings so common in the mass of Elizabethan sonnet verse.

"Great spirits now on earth are sojourning;  
He of the cloud, the cataract and the lake."  
"After dark vapours have oppressed our plains."  
"O golden-tongued Romance, with serene lute."  
"Hearken! thou craggy ocean-pyramid"—

and a score of others equally fine.

The music of Keats' verse is of far wider range than is generally recognized. The blank verse of "Hyperion" is nearer Milton than any other poet. The heroic metre of Lamia has Dryden's energy and suppleness. In the slow-moving harmonies of the Odes he is at his greatest. But we must take account also of such a lyric strain as the song, "To Sorrow," united—incongruously, it seems to me—with the Bacchic processional in "Endymion." One stanza will shew its quality:—

"To Sorrow  
I bade good-morrow,  
And thought to leave her far behind;  
But cheerly, cheerly,  
She loves me dearly,  
She is so constant to me, and so kind:  
I would deceive her  
And so leave her,  
But ah! she is so constant and so kind."

In the same class may be cited the lyric "In a drear-nighted December," one of the loveliest songs in English poetry.

(4) Has Keats a message? Some of his more recent critics, Mr. Robert Bridges and Mr. de Selincourt, have sought to revise the accepted negative verdict on this point. An elaborate allegory is said to underlie his "Endymion" for example, and an attempt is made to represent him as an imperfectly developed disciple of Wordsworth. In both directions these efforts to construe Keats as a didactic or

philosophic poet seem to me quite unconvincing. His early ambition to attain "a nobler life, where I may find the agonies, the strife of human hearts" was never realized. The early vision in which he foresaw a day when the patriot should feel his stern alarum, the senator thunder out his numbers to startle princes, the sage mingle with each moral theme his "happy thoughts sententious" remains a piece of boyish rhetoric. The tragedy of Keats' life is not summed up in the word incompleteness. There are extremes of suffering which do not educate but destroy the sympathies and aspirations of the soul. Tortures of mind and body wrought in Keats a disastrous change of temper and outlook, of which his letters give painful evidence. The noble dreams of his happy years survive as precious indications of what he might have been as a poet had his fortune been less cruel. But the actual development which we trace in him lies entirely on the side of his art. Writing to Shelley in acknowledgement of the "Cenci," he declares "An artist must have self-concentration—selfishness, perhaps. You might curb your magnanimity, and be more of an artist, and load every rift of your subject with ore." The real Keats speaks in those words. With more of the "magnanimity" which he deprecates in Shelley he might have given as a poet a more complete commentary on his own saying, "I have loved the principle of Beauty in all things." He might have attained an outlook upon life where in the highest sense "Beauty is Truth, Truth Beauty." More of an artist, no poet can be than Keats, not merely in the technical perfection of his verse, which indeed is seldom long sustained, but in his unrivalled intuition for every form or shape of visible loveliness in the living world of Nature, and in the immortal realms of classic legend, and mediæval romance; and in the richness of colour, and radiance

of light with which these things live for us in his poetry for ever.

"He was a Greek," said Shelley, catching at one aspect only of his genius. And one loves to think of Keats as akin in spirit to those nameless poets of the Golden Age, whose happy lot he has sung so exquisitely in the fragment of his ode to Maia, "May I seek thy smiles," he sings:

" May I seek thy smiles  
As they once were sought in Grecian isles,  
By bards who died content on pleasant sward,  
Leaving great verse unto a little clan?  
O give me their old vigour, and unheard  
Save of the quiet primrose, and the span  
Of heaven, and few ears,  
Rounded by thee my song should die away  
Content as theirs,  
Rich in the simple worship of a day."





## JOSEPH CONRAD.

By GEORGE LANCASHIRE.

ENGLAND, as befits a maritime nation, has not failed to pay her tribute to the glory of the sea. The immensity of its promise, its mystery and its romance, have attracted for ages the adventurous spirits of the land. Strong men have found its charm irresistible, whether in storm or calm, heat or cold. The writers, too, have given their meed of praise to its fascination, they have endeavoured to delineate its varying moods and to be the interpreters of those who do business in great waters. The sound of the waves is never far distant in our literature.

By one of those curious ironies of circumstance which often startle us it has been left to a foreigner, a native of a landlocked country with not even a lake to excite the imagination of its people, to be the most intimate interpreter in our language of the sea in all its aspects. This interpreter is Mr. Joseph Conrad.

In all the writings of Mr. Conrad there is displayed so much subtle and searching analysis of phases of human character, such an individual and sombre outlook upon life, so practical and half-wistful an air, that for a complete understanding of them, and their significance, we must learn something of their author, what events have

influenced his character, and what environment has moulded his thoughts.

Joseph Conrad Korzeniowski was born in Poland in 1856. His father was a noted critic and poet, who was arrested by the Russian Government shortly before the Polish rising of 1862. His mother shortly afterwards was exiled to Siberia where she died. He acquired a knowledge of the French language when in infancy, but our own to which he adds lustre he did not commence learning till his 19th year. Joseph, when a lad, was inspired to fight with the Turks against his hereditary enemies the Russians, but, not finding the occupation he desired, he drifted to the sea and joined a French ship bound for the West Indies.

The sea quickly claimed him for its own, it gripped his imagination, and henceforward he made seamanship his profession. Having determined upon this course it was but natural that he should come to England, whose ships were on every ocean and in every port, and where opportunity could be found of satisfying his wandering spirit. He settled down at Lowestoft and then shipped as able seaman on a collier trading between there and the Tyne. He obtained a mate's certificate shortly afterwards, armed with which he made his first voyage to the East, the glamourous East that had ever attracted and fascinated him.

For nearly twenty years he roamed about the waters, on steam tramps, sailing vessels and coasters, experiencing all climates, storms and calms, meeting with all races and types of men, thus accumulating that knowledge of human nature and of countries, of which later he made such a splendid use. He was all the time reading widely in English and French, his literary instinct no doubt driving him to select only the best writers in either language. In 1894 Mr. Conrad decided to take a six month's rest, during

which time he would do nothing but dream away life, and he took lodgings somewhere in London. Very quickly he found that idleness and inaction were irksome, and the desire suddenly came to him to write. All that he had seen, all that he had experienced welled up in his imagination, and he must have felt that he could worthily paint the scenes and give to others some idea of their beauty and significance.

It is said that he debated seriously within himself as to the language in which he should select to write. "French at first," says Mr. Clifford, attracted him more than English. Flaubert and Maupassant fascinated him as no modern English authors did, and so far as he can be said to have any literary parents they are to be sought for in France and not in England." But he had sailed under the English flag with English seamen, and he no doubt felt that they would understand his message as no other race would do.

In "Youth," he gives us his experience of his first journey as a mate, and speaking of the crew who were furling the sails whilst the boat was in flames, and the masts liable at any time to fall down, he says:

These were men without the drilled-in habit of obedience. To an onlooker they would be a lot of profane scallywags without a redeeming point. What made them do it—what made them obey me, when I, thinking consciously how fine it was, made them drop the bunt of the foresail twice to try and do it better? They had no professional reputation, no examples, no praise. It wasn't a sense of duty; they all knew well enough how to shirk and laze and dodge—when they had a mind to it,—and mostly they had. Was it the two pounds ten a-month that sent them there? They didn't think their pay half good enough. No; it was something in them, something inborn, and subtle and everlasting. I don't say positively that the crew of a German or French merchantman wouldn't have done it, but I doubt whether it would have

been done in the same way. There was a completeness in it, something solid like a principle, and masterful like an instinct—a disclosure of something secret—of that hidden something, that gift of good or evil that makes racial difference, that shapes the fate of nations.

It was that hidden and subtle something in the Englishman that appealed to the analytical soul of him of the Polish race, and English literature to-day is the richer for that decision. It is among the greatest compliments that have been paid to our race and our language.

He commenced "Almayer's Folly," but put it at one side to take command of a river steamer on the Congo. He returned from there very ill, and to give an instance of how he profits by every experience, to endeavour to penetrate the mystery and meaning of life, he writes in one of his stories :

I have wrestled with death. It is the most unexciting contest you can imagine. It takes place in an impalpable greyness, with nothing underfoot, with nothing around, without spectators, without clamour, without glory, without the great desire of victory, without the great fear of defeat, in a sickly atmosphere of tepid scepticism, without much belief in your own right, and still less in that of your adversary. If such is the form of ultimate wisdom, then life is a greater riddle than some of us think it to be. I was within a hair's-breadth of the last opportunity for pronouncement, and I found with humiliation that probably I would have nothing to say . . . perhaps all the wisdom, and all truth, and all sincerity, are just compressed into that inappreciable moment of time in which we step over the threshold of the invisible.

His health was so affected that after two years more trial he had to give up the sea, the time of hardship and peril, but with no remembrance of bitterness, and he settled down seriously to literature. He had observed much and experienced much, he had seen with the eye

of the thinker and the philosopher the emotions of men under many conditions, he had accumulated knowledge slowly and gradually, upon all of which he pondered much. His great knowledge of the best that the French and English literature could offer gave to him that intimate feeling for the exact value of every word, of every phrase, which is characteristic. In 1895 he published "*Almayer's Folly*," and shortly afterwards "*An Outcast of the Islands*," both books dealing with a certain sphere of life among the Malays.

The central figure of his first book, Almayer, is a disappointed, nerveless Dutchman, who is so pitiable and contemptible a character that when he ultimately drowns his sorrow in gin and opium we feel no pang of regret. There is unconcealed hatred between him and his native wife, but he loves with passionate devotion his half savage daughter, whom he sends to an English Colony to seek for culture. Her experience was not a happy one and the shallowness and sordidness of social life in this colony is depicted with many ironic touches. She ultimately revolts against the restraints of civilisation. The love passages between her and her wild Malay suitor are given with vividness and reticence and we are gradually led up to the terrible tragedy, as it appears to Almayer, of her marriage with this native.

In "*The Outcast of the Islands*" we meet with many of the characters dealt with in the previous book. The gradual fall of the conceited and weak-minded Willens is shown with great directness and force, which culminates in the inevitable tragedy that ends his life.

In both books we have fine description, albeit a trifle overloaded, of tropical scenery and sketches of character manifesting the author's wide knowledge of the subtleties and contrarities of human nature.

His greatest gift is his power to make the reader *see* what he describes. He has that rare quality of conveying to our senses the distinct atmosphere of the scenes and places he pictures, and so minutely and carefully does he obtain this, that we rise saturated with the very air that is breathed.

We hear the howling of the wind, we feel the sting of the salt spray on our cheeks, we gasp and sweat in the miasma laden air stifling with heat, and we joy in the sunlight that gleams over the waters.

Here is an instance of his power of conveying atmosphere combined with analytical painting of the soul of Nature from his story called "Heart of Darkness."

We penetrated deeper and deeper into the heart of darkness. It was very quiet there. At night sometimes the roll of drums behind the curtain of trees would run up the river and remained sustained faintly, as if hovering in the air high over our heads, till the first break of day. Whether it meant war, peace or prayer we could not tell. The dawns were heralded by the descent of a chill stillness; the woodcutters slept, their fires burned low; the snapping of a twig would make you start. We were wanderers on a pre-historic earth, on an earth that wore the aspect of an unknown planet.

But suddenly, as we struggled round a bend, there would be a glimpse of rush walls, of peaked grass-roofs, a burst of yells, a whirl of black limbs, a mass of hands clapping, of feet stamping, of bodies swaying, of eyes rolling, under the droop of heavy and motionless foliage.

The steamer toiled along slowly on the edge of a black and incomprehensible frenzy. The pre-historic man was cursing us, praying to us, welcoming us—who could tell?

We were cut off from the comprehension of our surroundings; we glided past like phantoms, wondering and secretly appalled, as some men would be before an enthusiastic outbreak in a madhouse. We could not understand, because we were too far, and could not remember because we were travelling in the night of the first ages, of those ages that are gone, leaving hardly a sign—and no memories. The earth seemed unearthly.

We are accustomed to look upon the shackled form of a conquered monster, but there—there you could look at a thing monstrous and free. It was unearthly, and the men were—no, they were not inhuman. Well, you know, that was the worst of it—this suspicion of their not being inhuman. It would come slowly to one. They howled and leaped, and spun, and made horrid faces; but what thrilled you was just the thought of their humanity—like yours—the thought of your remote kinship with this wild and passionate uproar. Ugly. Yes, it was ugly enough; but if you were man enough you would admit to yourself that there was in you just the faintest trace of a response to the terrible frankness of that noise, a dim suspicion of there being a meaning in it which you—you so remote from the night of the first ages—could comprehend. And why not?

The mind of man is capable of anything, because everything is in it, all the past as well as all the future.

This extract reveals to us the charm and fascination of Mr. Conrad's writings. There is a weirdness and sombreness in displaying the subtle effects that nature in her varying aspects has upon the minds of men, that we hardly find elsewhere in our literature. The artist in him pierces beneath the veil that hides from us the inner meanings of life, we feel in touch with the great sincerities of life, and by the "power of the written word" we obtain that glimpse of truth which he so desires us to catch. In his comprehension of the pettiness of man's life in the face of the great forces which have moulded man, he shows that simple grandeur of soul that is so evidenced in some of the greater Russian novelists.

In 1898 he published "*The Nigger of the Narcissus*," in which he shows himself at his best. The story has no plot, it is a simple account of the voyage of a sailing-vessel from Bombay to London. But what interests us is his delineation of nautical character, the mute heroism and the squalidness of seafaring life, of the intimate personal feel-

ing of the sailors for their ship. Speaking of the captain who is on the bridge during a storm, he writes:

He kept his gaze riveted upon her as a loving man who watches the unselfish toil of a delicate woman upon the slender thread of whose existence is hung the whole meaning and joy of the world. We all watched her. She was beautiful and had a weakness. We loved her no less for that. We admired her qualities aloud, we boasted of them to one another as though they had been our own, and the consciousness of her only fault we kept buried in the silence of our profound affection. She was born in the thundering peal of hammers in black eddies of smoke under a grey sky on the banks of the Clyde. The clamorous and sombre stream gives birth to things of beauty that float away into the sunshine of the world to be loved by men.

This fine expression of the feeling that exists between men and their ships could only be written by one who has answered the call of the sea, the sea which gives to its lover largeness and simplicity of mind. It is this sentiment that makes the old-time mariner regret the passing away of the stately sailing vessel. Mr. Conrad does not idealise his shipmates, but we attain a new insight into their reserve of human worth and courage—unconscious, doubtless, and seamed with many weaknesses. We know intimately the whole of the crew from the old silent seaman who, out of forty-five years on the sea, had spent but forty months on land, to the wretched malingering nigger and his ceaseless shirking of work. We enjoy the philosophy of the men and feel the fineness of the touch of contemptuous irony with which he depicts the character of Donkin the man who was ever grumbling and shirking work—

The man who can't do most things and won't do the rest. The sympathetic and deserving creature that knows all about his rights, but knows nothing of courage, of endurance and

of the unexpressed faith, of the unspoken loyalty, that knits together a ship's company. The independent offspring of the ignoble freedom of the slums, full of disdain and hate for the austere servitude of the sea.

This book proved its writer to possess unmistakeably an analytical psychologic faculty of a delicate kind, a power of description more subjective than had hitherto been fully known, and to have written a book that at a bound carried its author into the front rank of our writers of the sea.

In 1898 he published a volume of short stories under the title of "Tales of Unrest." Three of the stories treat of life in the Malay Archipelago, where "green isles scattered through the calm of noonday lie upon the level of a polished sea, like a handful of emeralds on a buckler of steel." There is no brisk action, no breathless dialogue, we are captivated by the charm and magic of the words and the poetic appreciation of the landscape. He paints the scenes with such delicacy and richness of tints, all so harmoniously blended, and with such largeness and clearness of imagination that they are placed before us in unforgettable reality. Here is an instance of his beautiful imagery :

The bay was like a bottomless pit of intense light. The circular sheet of water reflected a luminous sky, and the shores enclosing it made an opaque ring of earth floating in an emptiness of transparent blue. The hills, purple and arid, stood out heavily on the sky; their summits seemed to fade into a coloured tremble as of ascending vapour; their steep sides were streaked with the green of narrow ravines. . . . A torrent wound about like a dropped thread. Clumps of fruit-trees marked the villages; slim palms put their nodding heads together above the low houses; dried palm-leaf roofs shone afar, like roofs of gold, behind the dark colonnades of tree trunks; figures passed vivid and vanishing; the smoke of fires stood upright above the masses of flowering bushes; bamboo fences glittered running away in broken lines between the fields.

A sudden cry on the shore sounded plaintive in the distance, and ceased abruptly, as if stifled in the downpour of sunshine; a puff of breeze made a flash of darkness on the smooth water, touched our faces, and became forgotten. Nothing moved. The sun blazed down into a shadowless hollow of colour and stillness.

The story "An Outpost of Progress" is a vivid and tragic portrayal of the effects of the contact with elemental nature and the surrounding savagery on two Frenchmen. He reviews with grim irony the manufactured man of present-day civilisation, the man who lacks independent thought, all initiative, all departure from routine, and when the test of life comes, the opportunity to prove his true worth, society has so coddled him and cared for him, that he is an abject failure.

In 1900 he published "Lord Jim," his longest and from some points of view his best book. It is the searching study of a man who, when a moment of great trial came to him, failed. He never forgets this failure, and when years afterwards the opportunity comes to retrieve himself, before God, he takes it.

Jim is the mate of a pilgrim ship, with a cowardly captain and crew. One calm night the iron of the bulkhead is discovered to have bulged and it is apparently only a question of a few moments for the ship to keep afloat. A panic seizes the few white men, except Jim. Without wakening the sleeping pilgrims they launch a boat, and discover they have left behind them one of the men, who, unknown to them, had suddenly expired. Jim, who has all along looked on these proceedings with disgust, and has kept aloof from all their endeavours, hearing them call out to the man to jump, and knowing his own helplessness with 800 men aboard and but six boats, obeys an uncontrollable impulse and jumps. The steamer, however,

does not sink, it is discovered next day and towed to the nearest port. That is all, and yet upon it is based a minute study of the human mind.

Here was Jim, who, from a lad had been preparing himself for all difficulties that could beset one on land or water, had missed his chance. He cannot to himself justify his cowardice in leaving those helpless men on that ship, men full of faith in the superior knowledge of the white man. He is disgraced before the world.

Jim is of the small, the very small minority. The lack of honour makes life impossible. It is a subject of most delicate and elusive shades, and manifests to us how inevitably the human tragedy and comedy form part of the great scheme of nature. The vivid light of an acute and subtle intellect is thrown upon the working of Jim's mind, no evidence is omitted in his favour nor disfavour. The author's deep sympathy excludes him from taking sides, everything is given its due. Jim stands for humanity. There are hosts of living characters brought into the book, all sketched with the same care, but at no time do we lose sight of the main issue, the examination of a man's soul. The book suffers because we are asked to believe that it is told by Marlow to his friends after dinner, an illusion impossible to sustain, so closely reasoned, so involved is the story. Like all his longer books its value is impaired by his method of ordering his narrative. He commences in the middle, then reverts to the beginning, finds that he must weave in some new thread, and so backwards and forwards he skips. In "*Nostromo*" a later novel, close attention is necessary to know if we are at times in the present, future or past.

The scholarly thoroughness of Mr. Conrad's methods, to my mind, lends itself better to the short story, not that in which the French have so excelled, but rather what may be

termed the concentrated novel. In "Youth" a volume of three stories published in 1902, there is one called "The Heart of Darkness" that grips me as does no other story I have ever read. It is a psychological masterpiece. In the subtlety of his criticism of life he is therein at his best. It is a study of the Belgian Congo, and he gives us an acute analysis of the deterioration of the morale of the white man away from the restraint of European civilisation.

In it his style is more concentrated, his phrases are more filled with imaginative detail than in any other of his books. We weary under an exhausting series of sensations, under a tension that never slackens. It is an experience of the soul, a soul that craves to plumb the hidden depths of life. The story, I am afraid, will not appeal to the majority, it is too disturbing to many of their cherished ideals, the cheap platitudes of life avail them not as a comfort and a solace in such experiences as are passed through in this book. The story is told on a cruising yawl in the lower reaches of the Thames, whilst waiting for the turn of the tide.

The narrator evokes the spirit of the past, recalls the great names of those who have passed down this historic river and when Britain with its swamps, its forests, its jungles, and its savages, was the heart of darkness, to those venturesome Romans who dared to penetrate it. He proceeds to an outpost of civilisation, and passes on his way a French man-of-war, engaged in the task of civilising, which he sketches with that delicate touch of irony of which he is a master—

In the empty immensity of earth, sky and water there she was incomprehensible, firing into a continent. Pop would go one of the eight-inch guns; a small flame would dart and vanish, a little white smoke would disappear, a tiny projectile would give a feeble screech—and nothing happened.

There was a touch of insanity in the proceeding, a sense of lugubrious drollery in the sight; and it was not dissipated by someone on board assuring me earnestly there was a camp of natives—he called them enemies!—hidden out of sight somewhere.

He meets with strange and terrible sights on the Congo, gives vivid pictures of the sufferings of the natives, to whom he says, “the outraged law like the bursting shells had come, an insoluble mystery from over the sea.”

We have sketches of the Belgian methods of civilising, and the character of the men who are sent there, as the

Eldorado Exploring Expedition, whose talk was the talk of sordid buccaneers; it was reckless without hardihood, greedy without audacity and cruel without courage; there was not an atom of foresight or of serious intention in the whole batch of them, and they didn’t seem aware these things are wanted for the work of the world. To tear treasures out of the bowels of the land was their desire, with no more moral purpose at the back of it than there is in burglars breaking into a safe.

The man, Kurtz, they are sent to relieve is a man of noble aims and sentiments, and the most successful collector of ivory the Company has. But even they like not his methods of obtaining it, they call it “unsound.” His pallisade is decorated with human heads, he has unlimited power over all the chiefs, they come before him crawling; he goes away for weeks in the interior to hunt for ivory, he would forget himself amongst these people; he is the object of unutterable rites. The man is unsound at the core, he had as the narrator says “no public opinion to control him, a force which we are apt to overlook in the consciousness of our moral strength” and his passions were let loose, but the wilderness had found him out and had taken on him a terrible vengeance.

He was dying and it is only at his last gasp that he seemed to realise the terrible life he had led.

I was fascinated. It was as though a veil had been rent. I saw on that ivory face the expression of sombre pride, of ruthless power, of craven terror, of an intense and hopeless despair. Did he live his life again in every detail of desire, temptation and surrender during that supreme moment of complete knowledge? He cried in a whisper at some image, at some vision—he cried out twice a cry that was no more than a breath. The horror! The horror!

It is impossible to suggest the power with which is sketched the presentation of this moral wreck. The book is not to be taken up when one is depressed. The mystery and gloom of savage places obsesses the imagination. You feel the isolation of the unnerved, degenerate whites in the midst of incomprehensible nature, terrible and obscure, which seems to threaten their own creed and conception of life. The wilderness fascinates and oppresses you with its insistent horror. The humour and irony are subdued to the surroundings. The picture of tropical nature with its luxuriant strength and its fascination and the seed of peril within that is hinted at, sears into the soul.

"Youth" is the shortest of the three stories and gives the title to this book. It exhibits the same vivid observation, the same restraint and artful choice of words. It typifies the youthful zest and appreciation of the adventurous in life and glorifies its strength and imagination. But youth to Mr. Conrad is not the time of irresponsibility and pleasure, of no thought for the purpose and object of life; it is the trial, the test of life. Youth joys in the thrill of danger and adventure, and nothing can daunt its spirit of hope.

To the narrator who ships as second mate on his first journey to the East (he is but twenty) in "an old rattletrap carting about the world a lot of coal for a freight" the

voyage stands for ‘an illustration of life, a symbol of existence.’ This coal boat, the “*Judea*,” was destined for Bangkok.

They are so beset with accidents, that, it is not until six months have elapsed and three fresh crews have signed on, they make their journey. He has time in the long interval for reading, and incidentally we are given a sidelight on his literary preference. He says:

I read for the first time “*Sartor Resartus*” and Burnaby’s “*Ride to Khiva*.” I didn’t understand much of the first then, but I remember I preferred the soldier to the philosopher at the time, a preference which life has only confirmed. One was a man, the other was either more—or less.

Misfortune dogs them the whole way, fire breaks out in the hold culminating in an explosion. But their spirits are not daunted. “That crew of Liverpool hard cases had in them the right stuff. Its my experience they always have,” he says. “It is the sea that gives it—the vastness, the loneliness surrounding their dark stolid souls.” When at length they are compelled to abandon the ship, his only thought is that he would see the East first as a commander of a small boat. He apostrophises.

Oh the glamour of youth, oh the fire of it, more dazzling than the flames of the ship, throwing a magic light on the wide earth, leaping audaciously to the sky, presently to be quenched by time, more cruel, more pitiless, more bitter than the sea—and, like the flames of the burning ship, surrounded by an impenetrable night.

When in their small boats they see the last of their ship they make for land some hundred miles away and he parts company as soon as the opportunity arises. He is the first to land, beating the flagship of his captain by three hours, thus youth justifies its confidence and its daring. Closely

akin to the hopeful buoyant spirit of the mate is the pathetic spectacle of the old captain anxious to save his first command. He meets all trials and dangers with a dauntless spirit, but is conquered at last by that greatest of all terrors of the sea, fire. The story is told with great humour and we realise the bravery and heroism of the seafaring man. The book is an epic in little of the sea and the sailor has met with a chronicler of knowledge and sympathy.

"The Typhoon" which Mr. Conrad published in 1903 deals also with the sea, and the description of a typhoon can scarcely be matched even in his own writings. It describes at length one great storm and its effect on a handful of white men aboard a steamer in the China seas. He insists again on the power of the wrath of the sea to bring out the best—or the worst—in man. It is under stress of trial that man comes to know his own worth. The captain of the Nanshan is a stolid Belfast skipper without a gleam of imagination or a trace of humour.

A silent man who speaking to his first officer said :

I can't understand what you can find to talk about. Two solid hours. I am not blaming you. I see people ashore at it all day long, and then in the evening they sit down and keep at it over the drinks. Must be saying the same things over and over again. I can't understand.

He had sailed over many waters and had encountered the usual storms, but not until he commanded this boat had he met with the "immeasurable strength and immoderate 'wrath of the sea.'" Yet he meets this terrible experience with unwavering courage and in a most matter of fact way.

His duty is to save his ship if possible and without recognising he has done anything unusual he brings her safely

to her destination. The describing of the storm is more subjective in manner than in his earlier book "The Nigger of the Narcissus." It is not merely a phenomenon of Nature described by a spectator, it is an experience, an experience of the soul. He sees his subject in its place as part of a whole—of a system. The development and analysis of character under the action of the storm is his primary work and he never neglects it. As for instance—

The real thing came at last. It was something formidable and swift like the sudden smashing of a vial of wrath. It seemed to explode all round the ship with an overpowering concussion and a rush of great waters as if an immense dam had been blown up to windward. In an instant the men had lost touch of each other. This is the disintegrating power of a great wind; it isolates one's kind. An earthquake, a landslip, an avalanche overtake a man incidentally as it were—without passion. A furious gale attacks him like a personal enemy, tries to grasp his limbs, fastens upon his mind, seeks to rout his very spirit out of him.

A curious touch of irony ends the book. The captain writes the account of his experience to his wife, who, in a snug villa, reclining in a hammock chair, in a room filled with gimcrack furniture and ornaments, reads it and finds it prosy.

Mr. Conrad has published since 1903 "Nostromo," a tale of a South American Republic, and as he has led us to expect, it is soaked in the atmosphere of the Spanish speaking people. His last book, published in 1906, under the title of "The Mirror of the Sea" is a series of delightful sketches of the sea and the ships in which he has sailed. Every line reveals the charm that the seafaring life had for him, and the joy with which he recalls the memories of the past.

He has written several stories along with Mr. Hueffer, but he has too strong an individuality to be able to do himself justice, when writing in collaboration with anyone and although the books are above the average novel they do not attain that high standard which Mr. Conrad has forced us to expect.

In reading the novels of Mr. Conrad one feels conscious of the high purpose and ideals which he ever holds in view. There is no pandering to the popular mind. He is not a writer of stories with which to pass away an idle hour. The novelist to him is "the preserver and expounder of human experience." We must not look to him as a story teller with the usual methods of solution by rewards and punishments. The artist in him demands that he must be true to the great world of nature. There is no finality in life, so his books end as an episode in life ends. This to the idle reader creates a feeling of unrest, it is disquieting, what he desires is recreation and repose. Hence the popular novelist rewards the righteous and punishes the wicked—and such to him is life. To Mr. Conrad fiction is "human history or it is nothing."

He has seen and observed life, he has caught glimpses here and there of the very soul of man and nature. He has that sympathy which enables him also to take in the whole inner meaning of a beautiful scene or of a raging tempest, and the vivid impression he can retain until he has time to articulate it in words.

To attain this end he considers not material reward, but the dignity of his work. He says, "I don't like work—no man does—but I like what is in work—the chance to find yourself." Every sentence, every word, shows signs of thought, nothing is writ lightly, and sincerity gives to each phrase the ring of a living voice. His veneration

for the beauties and possibilities of the language is evidenced in all he writes and although at times he verges on preciousity, it is not with affectation, but rather through the desire of a sympathetic and fastidious temperament to convey the exact shade of meaning, a sincere endeavour to give us the spirit that dwells within the fastnesses of nature—and to make us *see*. And if he takes infinite pains to express his thoughts and ideas, he demands equally of his readers the whole of their attention and thought. He is not to be skipped over, every perusal will reveal hitherto undetected beauties of language and subtleties of thought. The outlook upon life is distinct and individual. There is about it combined with the vivid and melodious phrasing, a dreamy sombreness, a spirit of brooding reverie foreign to our native writers.

He sees in everything the significant fact; what is fundamental and enduring. He fared forth into the world as an untried youth, greedy of experience and full of hope, endowed by a psychological insight and power of analysis rare, and after many years of wanderings in all parts, his inherent belief in the unbounded possibilities of life and the progress of the human race was justified.

But it is as no apostle of the obvious that he writes. He develops and analyses human nature in all its hidden workings and inmost thoughts, he sees the mysterious world that lies behind the apparent and such is his mastery of our language, his genius for the right word, the telling phrase that he makes us "think thoughts sapping to the very core of life itself." His point of view and his mode of expression are distinctly his own. He conveys to us the meaning of life, he looks at things with the eye of eternity and we realise how insignificant are our little differences and the things we emphasise so much.

He justifies to us in all his works the aim of the novelist which he himself says is :

To arrest for the space of a breath the hands busy about the work of the earth and compel men entranced by the sight of distant goals to glance for a moment at the surrounding vision of form and colour of sunshine and shadow, to make them pause for a look, for a sigh, for a smile—such is the aim, difficult and evanescent and reserved only for a very few to achieve. But sometimes by the deserving and the fortunate even that task is accomplished. And when it is accomplished—behold ! All the truth of life is there, a moment of vision, a smile—and the return to an eternal rest.



## A WHITE ROSE.

By GEORGE MILNER.

## I.

'TWAS only a wild white rose  
He had gathered for her to wear,  
And set in her bosom fair,  
Her bosom snowy and cold :  
She plucked the petals and threw  
Them one by one on the stream,  
And her true-hearted lover knew  
That lost was the beautiful dream,  
The dream he had nourished of old.

## II.

" "Tis gone, but it's nothing I care,"  
She cries with a toss of her hair  
And a laugh that scornfully rings,  
As the naked stem she flings  
On the river hurrying by :  
He turns, with a bitter sigh  
To the dreary moor and is gone :  
She has thrown a true heart away,  
And stands by the river alone ;  
She will weep for him night and day,  
And in widowed solitude yearn ;  
But the love for ever is lost,  
And the rose on the streamlet cast  
Will never return.

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